



Republic of Moldova

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

REPORT
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMITMENTS
OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND
THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION BEIJING+30

CHAPTER I – OVERVIEW ON PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The country report on the implementation of the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing+30 Platform for Action (BPfA) elucidates the progress made regarding the implementation of the mentioned documents and the challenges encountered during the 2020 – first semester of 2024. The report was prepared based on the sectoral reports, the information presented by public authorities, and the recommendations received during public consultations with public institutions and civil society. The report contains the achievements, the challenges encountered, and areas for future interventions.

The data of the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report (2024) confirmed that the Republic of Moldova has made significant progress in ensuring gender equality, moving from 23rd place in 2020 to 13th place in 2024.¹

The report shows that the Republic of Moldova is paying increased and continuous attention to fulfilling the commitments undertaken by acceding to international treaties on human rights and gender equality, confirmed by guaranteeing the principle of equality through a series of organic and ordinary laws.

During the reporting period, national legislation was adjusted to international standards. In this regard, the domains of ensuring equality between women and men in various spheres of life and preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence are worth noting.

In this context, were adopted several national programs² in the gender equality domain. Also, the gender dimension is found in several sectoral policy documents in the fields of education, employment, health, security, etc. At the same time, the Government approved the national framework for monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, also the system of gender-sensitive statistical data was developed, and actions were carried out to monitor the policies implemented through the synergies between the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda.

In the context of the Republic of Moldova's European integration, the Government started the procedure of aligning with the European Union Directives, including the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women in various domains.

It is also worth mentioning the adoption of the National Development Program for 2024-2027, as well as the adoption of the law on ensuring equal access of men and women in accessing goods and services. As progress in the field of reference, we can mention:

- increasing the number of women in decision-making positions (for example, the share of women deputies in the Parliament increased from 24.8% in 2020³ to 40% in 2024;⁴
- in public authorities, the share of women mayors increased from 22% in 2019 to 24% in 2023;⁵
- increasing the level of information and awareness of the population and, as a result, deconstructing stereotypes;
- the openness of citizens to support women in politics and decision-making positions;
- the inclusion of the gender dimension in several sectoral policies;
- improving the skills of specialists in the field;
- increasing the number of male beneficiaries of paternity leave;

¹ https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2024.pdf

² The Program for Promoting and Ensuring Equality Between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for 2023-2027, the National Program for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence for 2023-2027, the National Program for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for 2023-2027, the Women entrepreneurship support program for 2024-2026.

³ <https://2cm.es/M1a6>

⁴ <https://multimedia.parlament.md/ponderea-femeilor-in-parlament-peste-40-sunt-deputate-iar-75-angajate-ale-secretariatului-parlamentului/>

⁵ https://a.cec.md/ro/numarul-femeilor-alese-in-functia-de-primar-consilier-local-2781_95999.html

<https://www.calm.md/fiecare-al-patrulea-primar-din-r-moldova-este-femeie-calm-ramane-punctul-dvs-de-spriijin/>

- establishing the Economic Council for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment, etc.

Among the practices with a positive impact, we mention programs for the economic empowerment of women, especially in the rural areas and in the security zone, as well as of victims of gender-based violence; humanitarian support and empowerment programs for refugees from Ukraine; positive fatherhood programs (Fathers' Clubs network); programs to reconcile work and family life, including the opening of nurseries at the workplace and family-type creches, etc.

Among the major challenges faced by the country during the reporting period were the COVID-19 pandemic, the humanitarian crisis following the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis, and climate change. Insufficient data on the gender impact of climate change and natural resource management makes evaluating the effectiveness of programs in the field challenging.

Moldova remains among the countries significantly affected by migration processes, with women constituting the majority (54%). Migration leads to the country's depopulation, especially in rural areas, the intensification of ageing processes (women are the majority among older people), and gender imbalances, especially in the reproductive age group, which affect the sustainability of the pension system and the development of the labour market.

The double quota system significantly increased the number of women in the Parliament, district, and local councils. At the same time, perceptions of women's role in politics and decision-making in society showed that in 2023, 27% of people believed that women had no place in politics, and 18% of people believed that they were less capable of holding management positions.⁶

Despite the positive trends in implementing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, women continue to be underrepresented in Moldova's security and defence sectors and formal conflict resolution dialogue formats.

The persistence of gender-based violence, including domestic violence and sexual harassment at the workplace, remains a significant challenge in realising women's rights to a life free from violence.

The following areas require improvement: the development and capacity building of the institutional mechanism in the field of gender equality (including the gender units within the central and local public authorities), allocation of adequate resources dedicated to programs to ensure equality between women and men in all spheres of life, economic empowerment of women and girls; the inclusion of the intersectional approach (by considering the connections between gender, age, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, residence, etc.) in development programs and the collection of statistical data; preventing and combating gender-based violence, ensuring protection and developing the resilience of victims of gender-based violence; preventing and diminishing patriarchal gender stereotypes; implementing gender-sensitive budgeting and digitisation programs, attracting girls and women in STEM, etc.

Continued efforts are needed to ensure access of women and girls from disadvantaged groups (with disabilities, Roma, women living with HIV, from rural areas, sex workers) to quality education and health services, social protection, and adequate economic opportunities.

Although the Republic of Moldova has adopted a solid legal framework for gender equality and empowering women, the implementation of legal provisions and normative documents requires continuous strengthening.

During the reporting period, critical areas for improvement were identified, including the strengthening of sustainable partnerships and the promotion of continuous dialogue between all actors involved (central, local, and non-governmental sectors). There is a need to ensure transparency in

⁶ <https://2cm.es/M19W>

decision-making and financial matters, as well as accountability of individuals and management structures. It is also crucial to invest in sustainable programmes that address the gender needs of different population groups. Despite the fact that a solid legal framework on gender equality and empowering women has been adopted in the Republic of Moldova, the implementation of legal provisions and normative documents requires continuous strengthening. Accelerating progress and promoting equality requires significant investment, including support from women's organisations.⁷ We emphasise the aspiration to accelerate the promotion of gender equality in the context of Moldova's European integration.

⁷ https://twitter.com/UN_CSW/status/1767936214928093625

CHAPTER II – PRIORITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND FAILURES

1. What have been the most important achievements, challenges, and setbacks in progressing gender equality and women's empowerment in the past 5 years?

Equality between women and men and the empowerment of women represent a fundamental right and a value for the Government of the Republic of Moldova. They are necessary conditions for achieving the objectives of sustainable development, economic growth, and social cohesion.

Promoting and ensuring respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms is a priority of the state, confirmed in government policies and the framework program of the National Action Plan in the field of Human Rights (PNADO). PNADO for 2018-2022 (PNADO III) contains actions regarding facilitating access to justice, ensuring freedom of expression, promoting equality, protecting the rights of people with disabilities, those from the localities on the left side of the Dniester River, and those who are part of national, ethnic minority groups, religious, and linguistic. According to the Evaluation Report on the implementation of the PNADO 2018-2022,⁸ progress was noted in the areas of preventing and combating human trafficking, gender equality and domestic violence, and children's rights. At the same time, PNADO 2024-2027 ensures the complementation of sectoral policies, focusing on ensuring human rights are prioritised in a participatory manner through the broad consensus between public authorities, civil society, and national institutions for the protection of human rights and strengthening the institutional mechanisms for implementation, coordination and monitoring the commitments in the field.

Moldova has confirmed its commitment to implementing the Association Program with the European Union. It will start working on the priority list for applying the Association Agreement in critical areas for 2021-2027.⁹ In the field of human rights, the list of priorities for the next four years includes ratifying Protocol no. 12 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms on Combating Discrimination, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the incorporation of the stipulations of the Revised Social Charter into national legislation.

The primary normative framework that promotes gender equality in the Republic of Moldova is Law no. 5/2006 on ensuring equal opportunities between women and men and Law no. 121/2012 on ensuring equality.

During the reporting period, changes were made to the mentioned laws. Thus, Law no. 121/2012 included new definitions related to the non-discrimination policy, such as continuous discrimination, prolonged discrimination¹⁰, the range of protected criteria was expanded (gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, health status, HIV status); more explicit regulations on the powers of the Equality Council, improvement of complaints examination procedures, improvement of data collection in matters of equality, non-discrimination, and diversity; monitoring, evaluation and annual reporting of results; strengthening the institutional framework to ensure better implementation of the principle of equality and non-discrimination; and improvement of complaint review procedures. Law no. 5/2006 on ensuring equal opportunities between women and men was amended by improving the notion of sexual harassment¹¹.

Regarding the criminalisation of hate speech based on gender criteria, new rules were introduced¹² in the Criminal Code by revising the art. 346 – the obligation to punish actions inciting hatred or violence, manifested through public exhortations, dissemination of information or other forms of public information, including through the mass media, in written form, drawing or image, or through an IT

⁸ https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/raport_de_evaluare_pnado_2018-2022.pdf

⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22022D1997&from=EN>

¹⁰ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135489&lang=ro

¹¹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=136606&lang=ro

¹² https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=131558&lang=ro

system, against a category of people based on prejudice, which also includes the criterion of sex. At the same time, the text "social, national, racial or religious hatred" in the Penal Code was replaced with the word "prejudice", and in art. 134²¹, the notion of "reason for prejudice" was defined as a preconceived idea of the perpetrator based on considerations of race, colour, ethnicity, national or social origin, citizenship, sex, gender, language, religion or religious beliefs, political opinions, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, health status, age, and marital status. Additionally, the Criminal Code was supplemented with art. 70/1, which sanctions intentional actions, public appeals, dissemination of information, or other forms of public information aimed at instigating discrimination on the grounds of prejudice.

Concerning sanctioning cases of discrimination, the Conventional normative framework was adjusted by introducing two articles in the Conventional Code concerning harassment and victimisation, acts punishable with a fine and/or suspending the right to hold a specific function or to perform a particular activity.¹³

During 2020-2022, the Council for Equality registered complaints regarding discrimination against women in multiple fields¹⁴. Of the total number of people who addressed the Council, reporting a situation of discrimination, 434 were men and 343 were women. The decisions issued by the Council can be accessed on the authority's official website, www.egalitate.md, under the heading Decisions/opinions.

To facilitate the promotion of human rights and the monitoring of the observance of human rights, the National Council for Human Rights, an advisory body of the Government, was created and has been operating since 2018. Through the platform of the specialised commissions (including the Commission on CEDAW) coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (Government Decree no. 150/2023), the Council monitors the implementation of government policy and international treaties in the field of human rights. Members of the specialised Commissions are representatives of central public administration authorities and public institutions, civil society, and development partners.

During the last five years, there has been a constant increase in the number of cases of granting legal assistance guaranteed by the government. There was a 5% increase in cases where government legal assistance (50,360 beneficiaries) was provided in 2022 relative to 2021. At the same time, the normative framework in the field was improved by including new categories of people who benefit from free legal assistance – victims of human trafficking (Law no. 1/2020) and people with disabilities (Law no. 298/2022). Also, in 2020, amendments were made to Act no. 198/2007 on state-guaranteed legal aid, expanding the regulation of state-guaranteed emergency legal assistance. This change allows for 24/7 emergency legal assistance to be provided to victims of domestic violence and sexual crimes at the stage of filing a complaint.

In 2022, the Government of the Republic of Moldova approved the national framework for monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (Government Decision no. 953/2022), which also includes indicators to monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of policies regarding gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Thus, from the totality of gender-sensitive Sustainable Development Goals indicators (137), the full availability of data at the national level is for about 56%, while another 23% is partial and 20% is missing.

¹³ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135489&lang=ro

¹⁴ In the political and public life of the country – 7, of which 3 complaints were declared inadmissible, in 4 cases no discrimination was found; in the field of education – 10, of which 4 complaints were declared inadmissible, discrimination was found in 2 cases, in 3 cases no discrimination was found, 1 complaint was resolved amicably; in the labour field – 140, of which 63 were declared inadmissible, in 25 – discrimination was found, in 36 cases no discrimination was found, 8 complaints were withdrawn, 5 complaints are under examination, 3 were written advisory opinions; in the field of health – 4 discriminations were found in the 4 registered complaints.

The normative framework of work and ensuring equality between women and men was amended by obliging the employer¹⁵ to take measures to prevent and combat discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. As a result, several private companies have adjusted their internal documents to the mentioned provisions, and actions have been organised to inform employers and employees. In this context, the initiatives of the National Confederation of Trade Unions of Moldova, supported by the ILO, to train trade unionists and members of women's commissions in preventing and combating harassment and violence at work¹⁶ are also worth mentioning.

At the same time, during the reporting period, considerable efforts were made to implement strategic documents in the field, such as the National Strategy for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence for 2018-2023 and the action plans regarding the implementation to it; the National Strategy for Ensuring Equality Between Women and Men for 2017-2021. According to the evaluation, the degree of implementation of the interventions within the strategies was relatively high, and the progress in terms of impact results was uneven.¹⁷ The evaluation's results served as a basis for the development of policy documents for the following years.

The drafting of the documents was preceded by an extensive process of analysis and public consultation with the most relevant stakeholders (key ministries, local authorities, development partners, and civil society). Respectively, the following national programs were developed and adopted: the National Program for Promoting and Ensuring Equality Between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for 2023-2027, the National Program for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence for 2023-2027, the National Program for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for 2023-2027, the Women entrepreneurship support program for 2024-2026.

Regarding the participation of women in the decision-making process, especially the participation in elections, we mention the amendment of the national legislation by introducing the mandatory quota for the registration of the lists of candidates for the parliamentary elections and the elections of local councillors - the lists of candidates for the parliamentary and local elections will be drawn up in accordance with the minimum representation quota of 40%¹⁸ for both sexes. The lists are ranked according to a formula: there must be a minimum of 4 candidates for every 10 positions.

According to BPfA recommendations, the states have the responsibility of creating an institutional mechanism in the field. As structures of the national mechanism to ensure equal opportunities, we mention:

- ***Council for Equality***¹⁹
- ***The Specialized Commission within the National Council for Human Rights***²⁰
- ***Coordinating groups in the field of gender***²¹

In the same way, we mention the establishment of *the Platform of Women Deputies from the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova*²² as a framework for cooperation and intra-institutional dialogue

¹⁵ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=136606&lang=ro

¹⁶ <http://sindicat.md/2024/06/27/eforturi-conjugate-pentru-a-combate-violenta-si-hartuirea-la-locul-de-munca/>

¹⁷ https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Raport_Evaluare_FINAL_StrategiaEgalitateGen2017-2021.pdf

¹⁸ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=143253&lang=ro#

¹⁹ The Council has the mission of preventing and protecting against discrimination, ensuring equality, and promoting equal opportunities and diversity. Among the main problems mentioned by the Council's casework during the reference period are actions based on stereotypes and prejudices related to age and the gender of workers in employment relationships; discrimination in the field of work on the basis of maternity; advertising materials with a sexist character; statements inciting hatred and discrimination based on sex from influential people.

²⁰ The Commission is coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and is responsible for monitoring the CEDAW Convention and developing the institutional mechanism in this field.

²¹ Coordinating groups in the field of gender are consultative and coordinating bodies, made up of gender units within the subdivisions with competences regarding the development, promotion and monitoring of policies in the field of activity of the specialised central public administration authority.

²² <https://www.undp.org/ro/moldova/press-releases/parlamentul-republicii-moldova-lanseaza-platforma-femeilor-deputate-din-legislatura-xi>

aimed at empowering women deputies in order to promote equity and equal rights, prevention and combating violence against women and domestic violence, women's economic empowerment, and family-friendly policies.

Under Art. 19 of Law no. 5/2006, the central public authority empowered to develop, monitor, evaluate, and promote policies in the field of equality between women and men is the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Within the Ministry, there is a specialised department, the Department for Gender Equality Policies, which is an integral part of the national mechanism for promoting gender equality in the Republic of Moldova. The respective subdivision has been strengthened by increasing the number of personnel and establishing an additional management function starting in January 2023.

At the same time, there are weak connections between the nominated institutions, requiring additional efforts in the coordination of actions and the training of specialists to create a robust functional mechanism. We reiterate that the institutional mechanism will be strengthened under Law no. 5/2006 on Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men by ensuring the effective operation of the Governmental Commission for Gender Equality. This action aims to involve more ministries and relevant institutions in the promotion of gender equality, creating a synergy for the implementation of CEDAW, BPfA, and the 2030 Agenda.

As an important achievement, we mention the inclusion of the gender dimension in sectoral policies in the fields of education, employment, health, security, etc. The public policies adopted in the Republic of Moldova during 2022-2023 registered a moderate increase in gender responsiveness by 0.98 points, reaching a score of 1.86 (out of 4 highest scores) compared to 0.88 in 2015-2016, according to the index "[Index of the integration of the gender dimension in policies public.](#)"²³ For example, the National Program for Employment 2022-2026 envisages an increase in the employment rate of women in the labour force by 4%. In this regard, alternative childcare services, such as family-type day-care centres, are planned to be developed. These support employees in creating their own daycare centres and expanding the supply of affordable childcare services in all areas of the country²⁴.

As a result, 23 additional nursery groups were opened in public kindergarten institutions with the support of development partners, a fact that facilitated the return of women to the workplace and the reconciliation of professional activity with family life for employees. Together with several facilitation to the labour force and family-friendly policies adopted, the number of inactive women decreased significantly – in a single year by 7.7% (54,300 women made the transition from inactivity to activity); the number of women caring for family members fell by 16% in a single year – from 156,300 in 2022 to 131,300 in 2023²⁵.

The National Program for the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS Infection and Sexually Transmitted Infections for 2022-2025 is based on non-discrimination and respect for human rights, including non-discrimination based on race, colour, national, ethnic and social origin, social status, citizenship, nationality, language, religion or belief, age, sex, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, health status, opinion, political affiliation, property, birth or any other arbitrary criteria. Gender aspects can be found in the Sexual Reproductive Health Program for 2022-2026 and the National Mental Health Program for 2022-2026.

²³ Index of gender mainstreaming in policies 2022-2023, CPD, SDC, Sweden, 2023: https://progen.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Index_gender-mainstreaming-.pdf

²⁴ In 2023, 23 nursery groups were created in public kindergartens with a capacity of 460 children, out of which 15 groups were created through the European Village Program financed by the government budget and 8 nursery groups with the support of Street Child and [UN Women](#). The enrolment of children aged 0-2 increased from 11.1% in 2022 to 12%, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

²⁵ National Bureau of Statistics: <https://statbank.statistica.md:443/PxWeb/sq/c3b986c3-7f70-473b-80dd-1a26aea16239>

In the field of education, following the general education curriculum reform, the school discipline of Civic Education was reconceptualised as Education for Society.²⁶ (compulsorily taught in the 5th – 12th grades), oriented towards the formation of social and civic skills, based on the Charter of the Council of Europe on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Education for Human Rights (2010). Starting in 2022, the Ministry of Education and Research, in partnership with the Center for Information and Documentation on Children's Rights, initiated the Children's Human Rights Defenders Forum with the aim of empowering girls and boys on the dimensions of human rights, equal opportunities, and non-discrimination.

The "European Moldova 2030" National Development Strategy (Law no. 315/2022) represents the country's strategic vision. The strategy identifies ten solutions for economic growth and poverty reduction. The principle of gender equality can be found in the general objectives regarding economic development, ensuring effective governance in the case of equal remuneration for work of equal value, and building a public administration open to the participation of citizens, especially women, in decision-making processes.

At the same time, the progress is uneven. Thus, in the *health and survival sector*, the country was in the 40th place – falling from the first place in 2020. In the *economic participation and opportunity sector*, we note the 5th place compared to 19th in 2020. In education (level of studies), Moldova placed in the 37th position compared with 61st place in 2020. In the *political empowerment* domain, Moldova is placed in the 38th position – a higher position compared to 2020, when Moldova was placed in the 45th position.²⁷

Although the national legal framework on gender equality is in line with international standards, women still face discrimination and inequality in social, economic, and political life. For example, in 2022, women in the Republic of Moldova earned, on average, 15.5% less than men in formal jobs, and many of them worked in the informal sector without social protection, medical insurance, and access to health services. Other challenges and gaps include:

- The persistence of gender stereotypes and patriarchal cultural norms continue to limit opportunities for women and negatively influence the perception of gender roles in society.
- Gender-based violence remains a significant problem, with cases being under-reported and with limited access to support services for victims of domestic violence.
- Women face specific difficulties in accessing financial and economic resources, including employment opportunities and promotion in the labour market.
- Women's representation in leadership positions and politics is still low, which limits their influence in decision-making processes.
- Disparities in access to quality education and training, particularly in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields, affect women's career prospects.
- Although there are laws and policies aimed at promoting gender equality, their implementation often remains superficial.
- Programs and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering women are often underfunded, which limits their impact and sustainability.
- Institutions responsible for promoting gender equality and protecting women's rights do not always have the necessary resources to fulfil their mandate effectively.
- The lack of gender-disaggregated data and comprehensive research makes it difficult to monitor progress and identify areas for intervention.

²⁶ https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/educatie_pentru_societate_repere_metodologice_2022-2023_ro_1.pdf

²⁷ https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

2. In the past five years, what have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies, and/or programs?

In the last five years, the Government of the Republic of Moldova, in partnership with civil society organisations and development partners, has focused its efforts on the implementation of the commitments assumed to accelerate progress for women and girls through laws, policies, and programs.

Eliminating violence against women and girls

In the Republic of Moldova, gender-based violence remains a pervasive problem, with over 80% of women and girls experiencing some form of violence and approximately 73% experiencing intimate partner violence.²⁸

Recognising the prevention and combating domestic violence as part of the national policy of protecting and supporting the family and as an important public health problem²⁹, the Government of the Republic of Moldova continued its efforts to promote and implement policies in the field. To strengthen the response of local authorities to cases of domestic violence in 2023, amendments were made to Law no. 45/2007 regulating the establishment of functions of specialists in the field of prevention and combating of domestic violence and rehabilitation of victims of crimes within the territorial social assistance agencies and the territorial social assistance structures subordinated to them, the structures responsible for social assistance and protection of children's rights in Chisinau Municipality and the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia. Also, the same law was amended by broadening the scope of competence in relation to violence against women, recognising the concept of femicide.³⁰ and redefining psychological violence, including through information technologies.

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) was ratified in October 2021 (Law no. 144/2021), and the procedures for aligning the national regulatory framework with its provisions have been started. The Government approved a National Program on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence for 2023-2027. The program is anchored on the four pillars provided by the Istanbul Convention – prevention, protection, prosecution, and coordinated policies. The budget for the implementation of the Program is 19.77 million MDL, of which 4 million MDL will be allocated from the state budget and 15.77 million MDL from the sources of the development partners.³¹

Starting from January 1st, 2024, a new governmental structure was established – the National Agency for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – which operates based on a regulation approved by the Government, with specific functions to ensure comprehensive and effective efforts to combat violence against women. In addition to the Agency, the National Coordinating Council in the field of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence³² was established.

Following the initiatives launched on the reform platform in the field of social assistance, for the first time in the country's history, service specialists responsible for the prevention and combating of domestic violence and the rehabilitation of crime victims were established in all districts.

²⁸ OSCE-led Survey on Violence Against Women: Moldova, 2019: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/1/424979_0.pdf

²⁹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=141510&lang=ro#

³⁰ Femicide is defined as the most serious form of violence against women, which involves the intentional killing or intentional causing of grievous bodily or health injury resulting in the death of a woman on grounds of gender bias

³¹ <https://gov.md/ro/content/prevenirea-si-combaterea-violentei-fata-de-femei-si-violentei-familie-va-fi-abordata-prin>

³² This council replaces the functions of the previous structure – the Interministerial Coordinating Council in the field of preventing and combating violence against women.

At the Ministry of Internal Affairs, an interministerial commission was established to monitor and analyse cases of domestic violence resulting in death or serious bodily injury of the victims³³.

During the reporting period, efforts were made to extend assistance and protection services for victims of domestic violence. In addition to the 12 existing shelters for victims of domestic violence, in 2023, the first regional integrated service for victims of sexual violence was opened in Ungheni. In Chisinau, the first Police Family Justice Centre was opened. The centre provides services for victims of domestic violence and sexual violence. With the support of UNFPA, under the auspices of the Ministry of Health, 11 assistance units for victims of sexual violence were created in the emergency departments of hospitals strategically located geographically throughout the country in 11 medical institutions³⁴.

Increased attention has been given to strengthening the skills of specialists in multidisciplinary teams through training programs conducted by the government in partnership with members of the National Coalition "Life Without Domestic Violence".

Female entrepreneurship

The Government of Moldova prioritises promoting equal economic opportunities for women and encouraging them to get involved in creating and managing businesses. In 2022, the Secretariat of the Economic Council of the Prime Minister launched a Roadmap for the Economic Empowerment of Women, which was developed with the support of UN Women and the Government of Sweden.

The Ministry of Economic Development and Digitization, with the support of UN Women, developed a program called "Women in Business" (Government Decision no. 1064/2016) to support women in starting and expanding a business. The Organisation implemented the program for the Development of Entrepreneurship.

The Evaluation Report of the "Women in Business" Program implemented by the Organization for the Development of Entrepreneurship during 2016-2022³⁵ outlined the beneficial impact of the program on the development and expansion of businesses among women, integration into business networks, and strengthened the capacities of, but also identified problems.

The "Women in Business" Program aims to support SMEs led by women throughout the enterprise's life cycle. During 2020-2022, the program registered important results.

Indicators	2020	2021	2022	Total
Number of people trained	295	222	279	796
Number of investment projects approved	235	96	52	383
Amount of funding approved (million MDL)	37,54	17,62	6,86	62,02
Volume of planned investment in the economy (million MDL)	54,74	27,21	9,59	91,54
Number of jobs maintained and created	593	307	261	1,161

Source: Organisation for Entrepreneurship Development

In 2023, the Government approved a new economic empowerment program for women – *the Program for Supporting Female Entrepreneurship*³⁶, (Government Decision no. 809/2023). The new program

³³ <https://mai.gov.md/sites/default/files/Comisia%20cazuri%20de%20violenta/informa%C8%9Bii%20sedinta%20din%2029.03.2023%20Comisia%20AMCVIF.pdf>

³⁴ IMSP Mother and Child Institute Chisinau; IMSP Chisinau Institute of Emergency Medicine; IMSP Clinical Hospital from Balti; IMSP District Hospital from Edinet; IMSP District Hospital from Cahul; IMSP District Hospital from Comrat; IMSP District Hospital from Căușeni; IMSP District Hospital from Orhei; IMSP District Hospital from Soroca; IMSP Florești District Hospital; IMSP Hîncești District Hospital.

³⁵ <https://moldova.unwomen.org/ro/digital-library/publications/2023/06/raport-de-evaluare-a-programului-femei-in-afaceri>

³⁶ The program provides for the following measures to support female entrepreneurship: non-refundable financial support for beginning entrepreneurs, grants for start-up businesses, technical assistance to support start-up businesses, and promoting the image of female entrepreneurs.

provides a broader range of financial and training support tools for women who plan to start and develop a business.

The program provides:

1) grants of up to 200,000 MDL granted to women who manage start-up companies. The funding from the government budget constitutes up to 80% of the value of the investment project, and the beneficiary's contribution is 20%, respectively. Additionally, entrepreneurs can request non-refundable financial support from the *e-commerce package* in the amount of a maximum of 30,000 MDL for investments related to electronic commerce.

2) grants of up to 600,000 MDL are provided to women who manage emerging businesses. The funding from the state budget constitutes up to 70% of the value of the investment project, and the beneficiary contributes only 30%. Additionally, entrepreneurs can request non-refundable financial support from the *e-commerce package* in the amount of a maximum of 50,000 MDL for investments related to electronic commerce. At the same time, increased attention is paid to the growth and development of entrepreneurial skills by providing training, consultation, and mentoring services at the pre-financing stage, as well as post-financing mentoring, so that, at any stage of business development, women entrepreneurs can call on guidance and training activities.

Also, the Government approved a National Program for Promoting Entrepreneurship and Increasing Competitiveness for 2023-2027³⁷ (Government Decision no. 653/2023).

Unpaid care and housework/work-family reconciliation

The government took numerous measures to enable parents to combine family obligations with professional responsibilities and participation in public life. In 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection launched the Family Program, which consists of support measures for children and families with children in the Republic of Moldova.³⁸

Thus, in December 2022, the government and the parliament passed legislation and the regulatory framework regarding alternative care options for children up to the age of three: care services organised by the employer at the workplace, services provided by individual childcare providers at the child's home, or services offered for a limited number of children at the caregiver's residence.

In order to encourage women to return to the labour market after parental leave, the Government introduced a new option for granting a monthly allowance for parental leave that is 90% of the income for a period of 12 months (in addition to the two childcare options – up to two years that amounts to 60% of the revenue in the first year of parental leave and 30% of the income in the second year of parental leave, and up to three years where the monthly allowance for each of the three years constitutes 30% of the revenue).

The legislative amendments of 2022 (Law no. 353/2022) give women the opportunity to organise their personal and professional activities according to their needs, ensuring the balance between professional and personal life. Thus, the right to maternity allowance is assured regardless of the income earned for the period of maternity leave, and the calculations for the maternity allowance are based on the highest income of one of the spouses.

³⁷ The total cost for the implementation of the Program for 2023-2025 is estimated at 828,277,600 MDL, of which 634,927,600 MDL from the state budget and 195,350,000 MDL from other sources. One of the specific objectives (1.3) of the Program "Sustainable economic growth and the creation of conditions for the promotion and implementation of ESG (environmental, social and governance) principles" includes the following targets: increasing the share of enterprises led by women from 30% in 2022 to 35% in 2025; increasing the share of SMEs run by youth, women, migrants from the total number of enterprises financed by the Organization for Development of Entrepreneurship, by 13 percentage points until 2025 compared to 2022: <https://mded.gov.md/programul-national-pentru-promovarea-antreprenurii-si-cresterea-competitivitatii-2023-2027-aprobat-de-guvern/>

³⁸ The website <https://familia.gov.md/> was developed and offers citizens access to information on this subject.

Another important measure that the Government is promoting is encouraging men to take paternity leave. Working fathers can request 15 calendar days of paternity leave in the first 12 months after the birth of a child, paid in full from the state budget. They can also benefit from these leave-in fractions, with the minimum duration of the fraction being five days. Progress is confirmed by the increase in the number of men who took paternity leave from 1,165 in 2020 to 4,006 in 2023 despite the fact that the number of births slightly declined over the same period – 30,730³⁹ in 2020 to 24,000⁴⁰ In 2023. Paternity leave allows fathers to lay the foundations for a more equal distribution of responsibilities and the deconstruction of stereotypes. It can positively influence parents' decisions on the allocation of resources for child care, housework, and women's employment. Additionally, it inspires other fathers to make similar choices.

Gender-sensitive budgeting

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection developed the Roadmap for 2023-2024 for the implementation of gender-sensitive budgeting at the national level for 2023-2024⁴¹.

At the same time, thanks to the partnerships between local public authorities and non-governmental organisations⁴² Local government accountants were trained to include the gender dimension in local budgets. Following a project financed by the European Union, twenty-four local public authorities allocated 2% of their local budgets to improving the safety of women and girls and preventing gender-based violence⁴³. This is a signal that cities and villages are ready to consider the needs of girls and women and make gender equality a priority for development projects.

Changing harmful social norms and gender stereotypes

Gender biases and stereotypes, which maintain and reproduce the traditional roles of women and men, represent significant barriers to women's empowerment and career paths. Reconceptualising the role of women in family life and exploring toxic masculinity, prejudices, and stereotypes often generate negative phenomena such as violence against women, domestic violence, sexual harassment, etc. Therefore, in addition to policies that aim to ensure equality between women and men⁴⁴, several key initiatives were adopted that aim to prevent and reduce gender stereotypes, such as:

1) *Together against gender stereotypes and gender-based violence Program*, financed by the European Union and implemented by UN Women and UNFPA in partnership with the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova⁴⁵, which aims to change perceptions in society regarding gender stereotypes, where all women and men enjoy equal rights and opportunities in their lives⁴⁶. The #Bodyright campaign launched by UNFPA and the Parliament has trained hundreds of young men and women to navigate safely on the Internet and overcome gender bias⁴⁷.

³⁹ https://statistica.gov.md/ro/numarul-nascutilor-vii-dupa-grupa-de-varsta-a-mamei-si-rangul-9696_3450.html

⁴⁰ https://statistica.gov.md/ro/numarul-nascutilor-vii-dupa-grupa-de-varsta-a-mamei-si-rangul-nascutului-pe-medi-9696_61228.html

⁴¹ The roadmap includes objectives focused on reducing structural gender inequalities through gender-sensitive policies and budgets, institutionalising the integration of the gender perspective in the budget process, strengthening the capacities of civil servants on the integration of the gender lens in the budget process, monitoring and evaluating (gender audit) the budget process.

⁴² The member organisations of the Platform for Gender Equality

⁴³ <https://unghe.md/proiectul-eva-mai-multe-comunitati-sensibile-la-dimensiunea-de-gen-mai-multe-fete-si-femei-protejate-de-violenta/#group=smartgallery&photo=5>

⁴⁴ The National Program for Promoting and Ensuring Equality Between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for 2023-2027, the National Program for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence for 2023-2027, the National Program for the Implementation of Resolution 1325 of the Council of UN Security on Women, Peace and Security for 2023-2027, the National Program for the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections for 2022-2025.

⁴⁵ <https://moldova.unfpa.org/ro/news/campania-bodyright-ap%C4%83r%C4%83-demnitatea-femeilor-%C8%99i-fetelor-%C3%AEn-mediul-online-interviu-cu-dr-nigina>

⁴⁶ The initiative aims to involve men in changing social gender norms through various innovative interventions, including the creation of a network of Fathers' Clubs and programs for the exchange of experiences between peers, campaigns to combat gender stereotypes and strengthening the capacity of systems to promote the role of men in pre-care - and postnatal, the involvement of priests in promoting gender equality, counselling programs for young couples <https://pentrucuplu.md/> and initiatives to prevent gender-based violence among women and girls with disabilities, including the provision of essential services.

⁴⁷ <https://moldova.unfpa.org/ro/topics/egalitatea-de-gen-%C8%99i-abilitatea-femeilor>

2) Every year, on the last Wednesday of April, jeans are worn as a sign of solidarity with victims of sexual violence. In this way, the community joins the *World Campaign Denim Day*, which promotes zero tolerance towards the phenomenon of sexual violence⁴⁸.

3) 16 days of activism against gender-based violence has one of its objectives - to diminish gender stereotypes related to traditional gender roles, which generate domestic violence.

We reiterate the importance of educational actions addressed to pupils, students, and teaching staff in educational institutions of all levels. Following the approval of the Methodology for Preventing and Combating Mobbing by Ministerial Decree no. 1024/2022 and its registration with the Ministry of Justice no. 1750/2022, the biannual report on cases of child abuse was amended. The heading "bullying" was introduced. Thus, from 2023, the consolidated report on the prevention and combating of violence in general and technical secondary schools will include bullying as a type of abuse among pupils.⁴⁹

Since social perceptions and beliefs are mainly formed through the mass media, in the Republic of Moldova, several activities to raise awareness of public opinion took place. During the reporting period, several normative acts were approved and amended to enhance the capacity of the media and relevant public officials to use gender-sensitive language and to enforce the prohibition of sexist language.⁵⁰

3. In the past five years, what specific actions have you taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalised groups of women and girls?

The Republic of Moldova guarantees equal rights for women and men in all areas of public and private life. All are equal before the law and public authorities without distinction of race, colour, national, ethnic and social origin, social status, citizenship, nationality, language, religion or belief, age, sex, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, health status, opinion, political affiliation, property, birth or any other arbitrary criteria.⁵¹ In this context, specific actions were taken to prevent discrimination against marginalised groups of women and girls and promote their rights.

Women and girls with disabilities

According to the National Bureau of Statistics data, in 2023, persons with disabilities represented 6.5% of the Republic of Moldova's total population, and children with disabilities represented 2% of the total number of children. In recent years, there has been a higher rate of disability among men—52.8% compared to 47.2% among women⁵².

The National Program for the Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities for 2017-2022 provided an intersectoral approach to social inclusion, ensuring respect for fundamental rights equally to other citizens in all areas of social life⁵³.

⁴⁸ During the reporting period, annually, at the initiative of member organisations of the National Coalition "Life without domestic violence" and the Platform for Gender Equality, with the support of development partners, government officials, public figures, influencers, journalists, but also women and men of different ages joined the campaign. The Denim Day Moldova 2022 campaign was dedicated to survivors of gender violence in Ukraine. The national campaign "Denim Day Moldova 2023" focused on increasing the degree of understanding in society of zero tolerance towards sexual violence by promoting consensual couple relationships. Video messages with the meaning of consent between partners were shared on social media.

⁴⁹ <https://mec.gov.md/ro/content/prevenirea-si-combatereaviolentei-0>

⁵⁰ The Regulation on Audiovisual Content, approved by the Audiovisual Council Decision no. 61 of March 1, 2024. Section 2 of the Regulation, Classification of Audiovisual Programs for the Protection of Minors and Chapter IV, Prohibited Audiovisual Programs under art. 11, para. 2, letter c) of the Audiovisual Media Services Code, includes regulations prohibiting the broadcast of programs containing sexist or discriminatory language in audiovisual media services. The Methodology for Monitoring Electoral Audiovisual Programs, approved by the Audiovisual Council through Decision no. 166 of June 14, 2024 includes gender aspects in the section on Monitoring Electoral Debates. Law no. 62/2022 on Advertising, art. 7 prohibits sexist advertising. Audiovisual Media Services Code no. 174/2018, art. 18 "Gender Equality" prohibits the use of sexist language and scenes of violence and degrading behaviour towards women and men in audiovisual media services. The Code of Ethics for Journalists in the Republic of Moldova, developed by the Audiovisual Council, includes commitments related to avoiding discrimination based on gender, age, disability, religion, social status, and sexual orientation.

⁵¹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=136130&lang=ro

⁵² https://statistica.gov.md/ro/persoanele-cu-dizabilitati-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2022-9460_60822.html

⁵³ Achievements include access to the services of the Community Mental Health Centre (32% of beneficiaries being women, 2021), gynaecological assistance, family planning and reproductive health services for women and girls with different types of disabilities (through the availability of adjustable gynaecological

The labour force participation rate of people with disabilities is low but still increased from 15.9% in 2022 to 17% in 2023. It now stands at 18.2% for women and 16% for men. The National Employment Program for 2022-2026 included a specific objective that focuses on the increase of the rate of employment of people with disabilities from 13.5% in 2021 to 17.5% in 2026. Accordingly, a series of active labour market measures were included⁵⁴; the company's estimated costs for workplace accessibility for workers with disabilities are subsidised at 50%⁵⁵.

The Ministry of Health has made it mandatory for all psychiatric medical institutions to set up a register of records on the receipt and forwarding of complaints about alleged cases of torture inhuman or degrading treatment. In all departments, in visible and easily accessible places, notices and mailboxes are installed regarding the possibility of addressing complaints and suggestions, from which all suggestions and complaints are collected weekly and analysed by the Bioethics Committee.

Progress has been registered in recent years, especially by ensuring the functionality of 40 community mental health centres. Community mental health centres are part of the public health care system and aim to improve the mental health of the population by providing specialised community-based services. Psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and psychiatric nurses are part of a complete team trained to identify and treat mental health issues according to national clinical protocol guidelines. The centres offer a wide range of services⁵⁶.

Women and girls living with HIV/AIDS

During the reporting period, the Republic of Moldova managed to maintain the level of the epidemic concentrated in the groups with increased risk of infection. Some significant progress is being made in HIV prevention programs, as well as services in the treatment cascade and structural intervention (such as stigma and discrimination, community empowerment, and improved legislation).

Also, in the reporting period, all actions in the field were based on the provisions of Law no. 23/2007 regarding the prevention of HIV/AIDS infection⁵⁷. The National Program for the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS Infection and Sexually Transmitted Infections for 2022-2025⁵⁸ implements a person-centred approach and integrated service delivery to bring services closer to the beneficiary through decentralisation. It also fosters more active community participation and involvement in the national response to the HIV epidemic. It introduces critical innovations such as a differentiated testing and

chairs for people in wheelchairs within 30 Youth Clinic; multidisciplinary team consultation services, etc.). In 2021, 1073 people with disabilities looking for a job were registered at the territorial subdivisions for employment, of which 459 were women (42.8%). As a result of involvement in employment measures, 188 unemployed people with disabilities (30.8% of the total number), of which 73 were women, were placed in the labour field.

⁵⁴ Individuals with disabilities seeking employment can register as unemployed upon request and can benefit from all employment measures, including: **employment services:** information about the labour market; career counselling; job placement; pre-layoff services; professional rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities; supported employment **active labour market measures:** 1. professional training through qualification, requalification, improvement, and specialisation courses; on-the-job training within the unit; professional internships; certification of knowledge and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education contexts. 2. subsidizing employers for hiring unemployed individuals who require additional support in the labour market, including individuals with disabilities. 3. subsidizing employers for creating or adapting jobs and hiring individuals with disabilities. 4. encouraging labour mobility through the payment of a one-time relocation allowance for employment in a different location from the unemployed person's actual residence. 5. subsidizing transportation costs for unemployed individuals with severe or pronounced disabilities who are employed. 6. subsidizing unemployed individuals for covering costs related to starting a business. 7. subsidizing employers to support local initiative projects, including hiring individuals who require additional support in the labour market. Also Government Decision no. 362/2024 amended the Regulation on the organisation and implementation of paid internships in the public service (Government Decision no. 532/2023), which stipulates that 10% of the total number of internship places planned annually in the public service shall be reserved for persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities benefit from compensation for transportation services (Government Decision no. 1413/2016).

⁵⁵ <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Programul-national-de-ocupare-a-fortei-de-munca-2022-2026.pdf>

⁵⁶ Psychiatric consultations; psychological consultations; psychosocial interventions; pharmacological treatment; collaboration with social assistance departments and services; occupational activities in the day centre; home visits by specialists from the centre's team; support groups for beneficiaries; referrals to psychiatric hospitals; issuance of certificates (firearm permits, driving licenses, etc.)

⁵⁷ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=133258&lang=ro#

⁵⁸ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=130469&lang=ro

treatment model, linkages between care elements, integration of services, and advancements in monitoring and evaluation technologies⁵⁹.

To prevent HIV infection and sexually transmitted infections, the government spent 6 million MDL during 2020-2023 (in 2020 – 827,300 MDL, in 2021 – 805,300 MDL; in 2022 – 701,200 MDL; planned for 2023 – 3.7 million MDL).

We reiterate the importance of implementing empowerment programs for women and girls living with HIV and information, communication, and awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and social distance from people living with HIV/AIDS.

Refugee and internally displaced women and girls

Starting from February 2022, Moldova was among the first countries in the region to host refugees from Ukraine (around 800,000). Moldova, with a population of only 2.6 million, received the most Ukrainian refugees per capita⁶⁰. Of the total number of refugees (continuously changing), women and girls constitute over 60%. The government, through the Committee for Emergency Situations of the Republic of Moldova, has managed the refugee crisis by establishing special conditions for crossing the border, organising placement centres for refugees, providing essential goods, and implementing a range of other measures. This has been done with the support of local, national, and international non-governmental organisations⁶¹.

Given the distinct gender impacts of the conflict in Ukraine and associated displacement, it was essential to assess and mitigate the impact of these risks on women, girls, boys, and men from diverse backgrounds. Between March 2022 and April 2024, gender analyses of the refugees' situation were carried out⁶², and their gender needs were identified, which contributed to a more efficient structuring of assistance and interventions. Following the Violence Safety Audits⁶³, risks related to gender-based violence and appropriate solutions were identified⁶⁴. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, as the central authority in social protection, has organised accommodation places, including placement centres for refugees, to meet their needs.⁶⁵

Refugees from Ukraine identified as victims or suspected victims of trafficking or domestic violence are referred to specialised social assistance services: the Centre for Assistance and Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking (women and children) and the Assistance and Protection Service for Victims of Trafficking (men).

During 2022-2023, refugee women from Ukraine benefited free of charge from sexual and reproductive health services offered at all levels of medical assistance – primary, specialised outpatient,

⁵⁹ The programme will also support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and will adhere to the principle of leaving no one behind. It will contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3, which focuses on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages, and Sustainable Development Goal 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Specifically, it will work towards target 5.6, which seeks to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health care and reproductive rights. It disproportionately affects groups at increased risk of infection, such as people living with HIV/AIDS, men who have sex with men, sex workers (female and male) and people who inject drugs, who often experience stigmatisation, discrimination, social exclusion, and human rights violations.

⁶⁰ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/92076>

⁶¹ Major actions include Green Line, assistance dedicated to refugees, launched by UNHCR in March 2022; the distribution of SIM cards/being offered free internet access; offering free accommodation and food, cash support, and access to social, educational and medical service. All actors contributed to the dissemination of information about refugee rights and the available services, disseminated through various channels, taking into account linguistic aspects, gender- and age-appropriate access and mobility constraints.

⁶² https://careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/RGA-Brief_Moldova_Final1.pdf

⁶³ https://moldova.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ro_gbv_safetv_audit_report_ukraine_ref_response_moldova.pdf,

https://moldova.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/gbv_safetv_audit_report_ukraine_ref_response_moldova.pdf

⁶⁴ Creating safe spaces in placement centres/communities; mobile teams; training specialists, communities, and refugees regarding PSEA, gender-based violence.

⁶⁵ Since February 2022, 137 Temporary Placement Centres for Refugees have been established, with a total capacity of approximately 11,050 places. As of August 2024, 32 centres were operational in the Republic of Moldova, with a total capacity of 2,089 places.

and hospital. UNFPA provides financial coverage for these services on the basis of the Partnership Agreement concluded between the National Health Insurance Company and UNFPA⁶⁶.

In 2023, more than 12,000 women and girls benefited from services provided by the government and organisations that are part of the response to gender-based violence. In the first trimester of 2024, approximately 1,544 women and girls received services specific to the gender-based violence segment. Several projects⁶⁷ focused on humanitarian aid were implemented, such as social and economic empowerment actions of refugee women, social cohesion between refugees and host communities, psychological, social, medical, and educational support, etc.⁶⁸ Also worth mentioning is the creation of 28 mobile and static-safe spaces (UNFPA), which offer protection and support to women, young people, and older adults. As of February 2022, more than 30,000 people, both refugees and people from host communities, have received assistance⁶⁹.

4. Over the past five years, how has the confluence of different crises affected the implementation of BPfA in your country, and what measures have you taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls?

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated⁷⁰ inequalities related to the division of caregiving responsibilities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, women disproportionately reported taking on the caregiving burden: more than 50% of women dedicated more hours to doing lessons with children, compared to only 30% of men. The pandemic and its impact on the economy have increased the financial vulnerability of women. Caring responsibilities, which were primarily assumed by women in isolation, and the difficulty of reconciling family and professional life led women to become less active in the labour market. Moreover, the pandemic had an almost immediate effect on women's employment: the share of women who continued to work was 15 points percentages lower than that of men in 2020⁷¹.

Moldova has made significant efforts to improve the situation. As in other countries, efforts have focused more on preventing/combating violence against women and girls, which has been on the rise during the pandemic.

Among the actions with a positive impact included increasing the financial support for beneficiaries of state pensions and social allowances, introducing payroll-related company subsidies, and increasing social assistance benefits for families with children. Likewise, the bonuses compensated only for damages, focusing on workers who contracted or died from COVID-19.

The VAT reduction for the hotel, restaurant, and cafe sector targets the economic security of Moldovan women, as tourism activities (accommodation and catering services) employ 2.2 times more women than men.

⁶⁶ <https://moldova.unfpa.org/ro/news/servicii-gratuite-de-s%C4%83n%C4%83tate-reproductiv%C4%83-pentru-refugia%C8%9Bii-ucraineni-%C3%AEn-republica-moldova>

⁶⁷ <https://moldova.unfpa.org/ro/news/servicii-gratuite-de-s%C4%83n%C4%83tate-reproductiv%C4%83-pentru-refugia%C8%9Bii-ucraineni-%C3%AEn-republica-moldova>; <https://moldova.un.org/ro/175647-suport-immediat-oferit-refugia%C8%9Bilor-din-ukraina-de-onu-moldova>; <https://neovita.md/noutati/la-centrele-pentru-refugiati-din-chisinau-specialistii-youth-klinik-neovita-mereu-alaturi/>; <https://moldova.unfpa.org/ro/news/programul-de-granturi-al-unfpa-%C8%99i-ue-%C3%AEmputernice%C8%99te-organiza%C8%9Biile-locale-s%C4%83-extending%C4%83-prevention>

⁶⁸ <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoieMj5OTJkMGEtZTExNy00NmE1LWJiNTAtMTIiInRiODhlNWYzZiwiZCI6ImU1YzZmOTgxLTY2NjQtNDEzNC04YTBiLTY1NDNkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOjB9>

⁶⁹ <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/unfpa-appeal-ukraine-2023>

⁷⁰ Women have been more severely affected by the pandemic than men due to pre-existing and persistent gender inequalities that prevailed before the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic resulted in women losing their jobs or income as they were forced to manage remote work while fulfilling household responsibilities.

⁷¹ Country report in the field of gender equality of the Republic of Moldova, 2021, page 7: <https://moldova.un.org/ro/185065-raportul-de-%C8%9Bbar%C4%83-%C3%AEn-domeniul-gender-equality-republic-of-moldova>

Armed conflict

The war in Ukraine has hindered Moldova's progress in implementing the BPfA and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in addressing poverty and food security. From the outbreak of the war in February 2022 until the end of December 2023, one million refugees crossed from Ukraine.⁷²

In the context of the refugee crisis, the state was forced to take a series of urgent measures and derogations from the national normative framework. These measures were approved by the Extraordinary Situations Commission of the Government of the Republic of Moldova to guarantee equal and urgent access to all vulnerable categories of the population. In order to deal with the negative impact of the crisis on the progress made by women and girls, the Republic of Moldova established the temporary protection regime starting on March 1st, 2023 (Government Decision no. 21/2023 on granting temporary protection to displaced persons from Ukraine). Through the temporary protection regime, temporary protection applicants have access to employment, accommodation, primary and emergency medical assistance, education, assistance, and social protection. Measures have been taken to minimise the negative impact of the crisis on women's rights and progress, ensuring their access to essential services and promoting their inclusion in society.

The government has been actively involved in managing the massive influx of refugees through several commissions and working groups, such as the Commission for Exceptional Situations, coordinated by the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, the National Commission for Migration, managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and others.

Also, the development partners⁷³ have established working groups: Protection, Gender-based Violence, and Gender Task Force with the participation of empowered actors from the authorities, civil society, and the refugee community. Moreover, thanks to the partnership with civil society and with the support of development partners, assistance and empowerment programs were carried out for refugee women and girls as well as for the host communities⁷⁴.

5. In the next five years, what are the priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies, and/or programs?

The government has several action priorities that will help support the advancement of progress for women and girls in all BPfA areas, as follows:

The strategic commitment regarding gender equality through the program on gender equality for 2023-2027⁷⁵ defines the framework of the efforts made by the Republic of Moldova in this area, being designed to achieve five general objectives, namely:

1) Reducing structural gender inequalities through gender-sensitive policies and budgets. This objective will be achieved by improving the regulatory and methodological framework for preparing public policy documents, budgets, and regional and local development projects.

2) Increasing social protection for more people who are involved in long-term care activities for family members. Through this objective, the improvement of the legal framework will be aimed at identifying and eliminating the provisions that, directly or indirectly, disfavour the degree of social protection of people involved in the long-term care of family members. Additionally, the achievement of this objective requires the expansion and creation of social support services for these people.

⁷² https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000157737/download/?_ga=2.89628499.977635081.1716873413-2065164282.1716873413

⁷³ UNHCR, UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, IOM

⁷⁴ <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrJoiMjk5OTJkMGEtZTEzNjY0NmEiLWJiNTAtMTIiNiRiODhNWYzIiwidCI6ImU1YzZMOTgkLTY2NiQtNDZlNC04YTBiLTUyNDNkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOiJh9>

⁷⁵ The National Program for Promoting and Ensuring Equality Between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for 2023-2027

3) Reducing the gender pay gap for equal work or work of equal value. The implementation of this objective will focus on informing and empowering employees in the private sector regarding their rights regarding equal work and work of equal value, in particular, the right to request information and clarifications from employers regarding possible gender differences in pay. At the same time, several methodological solutions and support will be created for employers in the private sector (private for-profit or non-profit organisations) to encourage employers to implement inclusive and fair salary schemes and processes.

4) Increase the number of men promoting gender equality. The government will undertake communication and promotional activities to highlight men who are actively involved in caregiving, engage in activities often viewed as feminised, and contribute to promoting gender equality. This will include a range of activities such as launching annual campaigns to highlight men as advocates for gender equality, increasing initiatives to engage fathers, grandfathers, and other male caregivers in child-rearing and education through programs like Father's Clubs and volunteer opportunities, etc.

5) To achieve this goal, the government will improve procedures to ensure transparency in decision-making by including minimum requirements for reasonable accommodation and minimum efforts to consult underrepresented women. In addition, the government will establish a grant programme for underrepresented women's groups and organisations.

As part of Moldova's accession process to the European Union, the country has made several commitments to ensure gender equality in various areas of society, including the implementation of European Union directives to ensure equal opportunities for women and men.⁷⁶

Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity, and food security

According to the National Bureau of Statistics data, absolute poverty in the Republic of Moldova was 31.6% in 2023. The majority of poor people lived in rural areas (42%) compared to urban areas (17.7%). Women face a higher risk of poverty, with 13.7% living in absolute poverty, while men have an absolute poverty rate of 23.6%. The highest rate of absolute poverty is found in households with three or more children, reaching a value of up to 40.9%.

The main instrument that acts as a social safety net for low-income families (the legislation uses the notion of disadvantaged families) and provides support for the transition out of poverty is the *Social Aid Program*. The Social Aid Program started in 2008 and was set up to provide financial help through cash transfers instead of the previous system of categorical benefits. This new approach was based on evaluating people's needs using a specific method. It replaced the old system as outlined in Law no. 133/2008 on social assistance and Government Decision no. 1167/2008, which detailed how to determine and pay social aid.

The program provides for the provision of a guaranteed minimum monthly income, which is a calculated minimum level guaranteed by the state to a family.⁷⁷ and includes three sets of criteria that applicants must meet to qualify for the benefits. In addition to assessing the family members' income and occupational status, it also includes a proxy score that evaluates the family's well-being. According to the

⁷⁶ Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC, Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast), Directive (EU) 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures, Council Directive of 19 December 1978 on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security, Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services

⁷⁷ In 2023, 61,599 families benefited from social aid, with an average payment of 1 647,72 MDL per month. Of these, 40% were families with children and 48% families with at least one person with disability. Over 76% of recipients of social aid live in rural localities.

Ministry of Labour and Social Protection data, from 2021 to 2023, about 55% of social aid beneficiaries were women, and 45% were men.

According to UN estimates, over 60% of households in the Republic of Moldova are considered vulnerable in terms of energy resources. The Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund was created by the Government in 2022⁷⁸ and is managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Through the fund, compensation is offered to people for the payment of energy bills. In 2022, over 800,000 households benefited from compensation to cover their energy bills, creating a positive impact on reducing financial and energy poverty. The impact assessment of the fund showed that energy poverty was reduced from 10% to 70% for households, depending on the household's vulnerability category.⁷⁹ In this context, continuous efforts are needed in this segment.

At the same time, we reiterate the need to ensure the implementation of the Food Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for 2023-2030,⁸⁰ which reflects connections with SDG1, SDG2, SDG5.

Eliminating violence against women and girls

The Republic of Moldova ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), undertook to ensure respect for fundamental European values unanimously recognised, such as democracy and the rule of law, and is committed to preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women to ensure respect for fundamental rights and human dignity for every woman and girl.

In 2023, the Government approved a National Program on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence for 2023-2027. The program is focused on four pillars of the Istanbul Convention – prevention, protection, prosecution, and coordinated policies. Accordingly, the implementation of its objectives and actions remains a priority for the coming years, and in this sense, it is aimed at:

1) The women and men of the Republic of Moldova and the government authorities adopt zero tolerance towards all forms of violence against women and domestic violence by 2027.

2) Strengthening the mechanism of protection and assistance for victims of violence against women and domestic violence through the multidimensional approach according to the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.

3) The justice system ensures the investigation, effective prosecution, and trial of all forms of violence against women and domestic violence with the prosecution and re-education of the perpetrators.

4) Public authorities, in partnership with civil society, implement comprehensive policies to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, ensuring good coordination and monitoring.

The Government created the National Agency for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which began its activity on January 1, 2024. The Agency will focus on ensuring the fulfilment of commitments in priority areas of activity⁸¹. At the same time, the Government is currently working to expand the network of services addressed to victims of domestic violence.

In the context of the "Restart" reform, changes were made to the normative framework. Thus, starting from January 1st, 2024, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection established the position of specialist in the field of prevention and combating domestic violence and the rehabilitation of victims of crimes in

⁷⁸ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=139097&lang=ro

⁷⁹ <https://www.undp.org/ro/moldova/press-releases/25-de-tari-au-redus-de-doua-ori-saracia-multidimensionala-decurs-de-15-ani-insa-11-billions-of-people-remain-poor-while-what>

⁸⁰ https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/subiect-12-nu-531-maia-site_2.pdf

⁸¹ The main directions of action of the Agency for 2024 refer to prevention by informing and raising awareness of public opinion regarding the phenomenon of violence and its consequences, improving the training system for professionals and the intervention of multidisciplinary teams, as well as coordinating inter-institutional efforts by developing an information system that will provide disaggregated data, for in-depth analysis and a better understanding of the phenomenon, thus facilitating evidence-based decision-making and improving strategic interventions.

each of the regional social assistance agencies and the Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence and Rehabilitation of crime victims in the territorial social assistance divisions, effective on January 1st, 2024. In this sense, training sessions have been organised; also, in the next period, it is necessary to strengthen these resources, together with the harmonisation of the methodological instructions of the profile.

Access to quality, affordable health services, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

In 2023, maternal mortality decreased, registering 19.5 cases per 100.000 live births, compared to 59.4 cases in 2022, according to the National Public Health Agency's data. However, this indicator exceeds the average maternal mortality rate in Europe with uneven dynamics that reveal inequitable access to reproductive health information and education, especially for vulnerable women from poor and rural families, as well as the low quality of medical assistance.

Although in recent years, the Republic of Moldova has made significant progress in reducing the number of births to teenagers, recording a rate of 27.3 live births per 1,000 girls aged between 15 and 19, this level is three times higher than the European average. It presents a challenge (according to 2020 data from the National Bureau of Statistics). Most teenage births are among young girls in rural areas, where access to sexual and reproductive health information and youth-friendly health services is still relatively limited. The *National Development Strategy European Moldova 2030*, approved by Law no. 315/2022, establishes the arrangements of the Republic of Moldova, namely increasing the resilience of the health system in situations that endanger people's health. By 2030, the following strategic targets are to be implemented:

1) 30% reduction in premature mortality caused by non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment;

2) the methods of prevention and treatment of the abuse of narcotic substances, psychotropic substances, and their precursors, as well as the abuse of alcohol, will be strengthened;

3) ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning, information and education;

4) achieving universal health coverage, access to quality essential health services, including protection from the financial risks associated with these services, and access to safe, adequate, quality, and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

In the *National Health Strategy Health 2030*, approved by Government Decision no. 387/2023, the general objective 2.2. focuses on modernising the health system and improving the quality of health services and establishes the priority direction of intervention through the specific objective 2.2.3, which focuses on improving health system capacities to deliver quality sexual and reproductive health information, services, and goods based on respect for human rights, patient-centeredness and ensuring inclusion. This action will be evaluated by monitoring the abortion rate per 1,000 women of reproductive age (15-49 years) in rural and urban areas.

Unpaid care and domestic work/work-family reconciliation

Alternative childcare services are essential for boosting and promoting women's economic empowerment and reconciling professional and personal lives.⁸²

⁸² The period for requesting paternity leave was extended from 56 days to 1 year, the duration was increased by 1 day from 14 days to 15 days; nursery services were expanded through direct funding from the state budget; reforming childcare leave so that it is shorter, better paid, with much more significant involvement of fathers; changes were made to the legislative framework regarding the promotion of flexible work programs for families with children.

The Law on Alternative Childcare Services (Law no. 367/2022) was approved to expand and diversify childcare services. This law introduces three types of alternative childcare services for children up to three years of age.⁸³

To ensure the implementation of the legal framework, the Government approved the Regulations regarding the organisation and functioning of these three types of services (Government Decision no. 572/2023).

In 2023, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection launched the National Program on childcare services for children up to the age of three, which aims to increase the placement rate of children up to the age of three in early education institutions or alternative childcare services. In 2022, the enrolment rate for children up to the age of three was 11%, and it was 11.9% in 2023. These measures provide favourable conditions for women to be employed and return to the labour market after parental leave.

Basic services and infrastructure (water, sanitation, hygiene, energy, transport, communication, etc.)

In 2022, it was approved The Unique Programme Document for 2022-2024 (Government Decision no. 23/2022). One of the priorities of the Unique Programme Document focuses on improving the local technical-building infrastructure, involving the construction and modernisation of aqueducts, purification systems, and sewerage networks. It includes 155 local development projects and 26 regional development projects aimed at modernising water supply and sanitation services, thus aiming to facilitate access to basic infrastructure for residents of rural and remote areas, including women and girls. During 2022-2024, six regional development projects for water supply and sanitation were carried out, the beneficiaries being 5,361 women. At the same time, 43,118 women and girls benefited following the completion of 76 local development projects.

Additionally, in order to ensure access to water supply and sewerage services, 9 major projects were implemented during 2019-2023 with the financial support of the governments of Germany, the European Union, Switzerland, and Austria. The total value of the investments is approximately 541 million MDL. Through the implementation of these projects, access to water supply and sanitation services was created for approximately 45,000 women and girls. The government plans to extend access to water and sanitation services to other localities.

Gender-sensitive budgeting

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection has created a Roadmap for 2023-2024 to implement gender-sensitive budgeting at the national level. The Roadmap outlines goals aimed at reducing structural gender inequalities through gender-sensitive policies and budgets. It focuses on integrating gender perspectives into the budgeting process, enhancing the skills of civil servants, and conducting monitoring and evaluation (gender audits) of budget reforms.

We conclude the actions that were initiated and the ones that we are implementing at the moment in the context of the previously mentioned priorities. In this sense:

- We are strengthening social assistance programs to continue supporting disadvantaged families and reducing rural poverty.
- We are effectively implementing existing legislation and policies on combating violence against women and expanding victim support services.

⁸³ Services organised by the employer at the workplace; individualised services offered by a qualified childcare worker at the child's residence; and family-type mini creches.

- We improve access to quality medical services by investing in reproductive health education and modernising health infrastructure.
- We promote work-life balance by expanding childcare services and implementing flexible work schedules.
- We continuously invest in basic infrastructure to ensure access to essential services for all residents, especially in rural areas.
- We constantly monitor and evaluate gender-sensitive budget policies to ensure their effectiveness and impact in reducing gender inequalities.

CHAPTER III – PROGRESS IN THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Inclusive development, shared prosperity, and decent work

Critical areas of concern:

- A. Women and poverty
- F. Women and the economy
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

6. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to promote gender equality in employment (including informal, non-standard employment, and entrepreneurship)?

Strengthened/enforced laws, workplace policies, and practices that prohibit discrimination in the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women in the public and private sectors, as well as equal pay legislation

The Republic of Moldova's legislation prohibits discrimination in all spheres of life. This is enshrined in the Constitution and the normative acts regulating labour relations.

Law no. 107/2022⁸⁴ amended the Labour Code and the Salary Law no. 847/2002. The purpose of the amendments was to make the wage system more transparent and to reflect the gender dimension in accordance with the Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee (2020). Thus, equal pay for equal work or work of equal value was introduced in the Labour Code. Also, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection introduced in the Labour Code the employer's obligation to inform the employees and/or their representatives periodically (at least once per year – at the latest in the first semester of the year following the year of the payroll) on the gender pay gap by category of employees and occupation, disaggregated by gender. Therefore, the employees have the right to request and obtain information on pay levels disaggregated by gender.

To ensure the implementation of this law, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is in the process of drafting the necessary methodical and explanatory instructions for the application of the legislative provisions, which will include the development of clear criteria and methodologies for the evaluation and classification of work. In this process, a key element would be to look at how EU legislation on equal pay for equal work and work of equal value is transposed and implemented.

⁸⁴ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=131234&lang=ro

These processes necessarily include consultations with the National Confederation of Employers, the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitization, and other partners.

In the same context, since 2023, the Government, with the development partners, has been implementing the National Program for Promoting and Ensuring Equality Between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for 2023-2027. One of the objectives of this program is to reduce the gender pay gap for equal work or work of equal value and to empower women. Equally important is the implementation of the National Program on Women Entrepreneurship and the National Employment Program, whose one objective is increasing employment among women.

Taking action to prevent sexual harassment, including in the workplace

On December 28th, 2023, the Parliament adopted the Law on the Ratification of the International Labor Organization Convention No. 190 on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the Workplace. We also note the efforts to bring national legislation in line with international standards on the prevention of sexual harassment by amending the regulatory framework through Law No. 74/2023. The new norms include new competencies of the State Labour Inspectorate in the field of prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace; new competence of the labour inspectors to verify employers on the application of regulations for prevention of sexual harassment; the obligation of the employer to undertake measures to prevent sexual harassment; inclusion in the collective labour contract of the commitment on the prohibition of sexual harassment at the workplace; and fines for employers for failure to implement measures to prevent sexual harassment and/or the reluctance in reporting of cases.

Government authorities have passed internal rules and mechanisms that encourage victims of sexual harassment to make a complaint and protect victims of sexual harassment. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Ministry of Defence passed internal rules that aim to prevent and combat sexual harassment in the workplace. The internal framework of the Ministry of Culture pledges to complete intolerance of any form of direct or indirect discrimination against employees in the framework of labour relations. Following the reported acts of harassment in three theatres that the government funds, the Ministry of Culture created a working group for analysing these cases, which decided to establish the Council of Ethics within the Ministry of Culture, and, in this context, the Ministry of Culture adopted regulations on preventing and combating harassment at work.

Regarding sanctions for cases of discrimination, amendments have been made in the Contravention Code of the Republic of Moldova no. 218/2008 by introducing two articles – art. 702 Harassment and art. 703 Victimization, which is punishable under the current law⁸⁵. The regulatory framework was amended by requiring the employer to take measures to prevent and combat discrimination on any grounds, sexual harassment, and victimisation at work. According to the new provisions, the employer is required to inform in writing within 7 days the trade union representative about the results of the examination of the cases of discrimination and sexual harassment and the measures taken to eliminate the violations detected in these cases. The labour inspector will verify the employer's application of measures to prevent and combat cases of discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace.

It is important to raise awareness among workers and specialists in the field about sexual harassment in the workplace and educational institutions.

Improving financial inclusion and access to credit, including for self-employed women

⁸⁵ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135489&lang=ro

The Entrepreneurship Development Organization (ODA) implements several initiatives to facilitate access to financial resources and increase economic investment⁸⁶. ODA manages the Credit Guarantee Fund (FGC), which provides financial guarantees for loans requested by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from partner financial institutions. One of the services offered by the FGC that is created exclusively for women is "Enterprises founded or managed by women entrepreneurs." The evolution of financial guarantees over the last five years is shown in the table below.

Starting in 2022, ODA will manage the Fund for Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth of Moldova (FACEM), created by Law no. 320/2022. Through FACEM, ODA implements an ambitious program to support SMEs⁸⁷ -- Investment Incentive Program 373, approved by Government Decision no. 351/2023. In 2023, 176 SMEs were supported through the program, while the total amount of credit granted was 521,739,820 MDL. Out of the total number of supported SMEs, 49 (28%) were founded by women, while the amount of credit given to women constitutes 109,867,412 MDL.

Enterprises founded or managed by women entrepreneurs funded by the Organization for the Development of Entrepreneurship, Credit Guarantee Fund (2020-2023)

Indicators	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Number of guarantees	39	87	79	91	296
Amount of guarantees (mil. MDL)	17.95	78.56	97.61	71.29	265.41
Amount of offered credits (mil. MDL)	51.62	192.78	163.78	153.69	561.87
Proportion of the total guaranteed products (%)	7.8	18.6	17.6	20	16

Source: Organization for the Development of Entrepreneurship

7. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to recognise, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life balance, and strengthen the rights of paid care workers?

Extended childcare services were implemented, or the existing services have become more accessible

To efficiently realise the provisions of the *National Program for Child Protection for 2022 -- 2026* and its Action Plan, approved by Government Decision no. 347/2022, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection approved a set of measures to achieve the proposed goals.⁸⁸

At the same time, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, in partnership with the organisation "Child, Community, Family – Moldova," has developed social services for children of young age: daycare

⁸⁶ In 2022, 13 companies run by young people, including women in the south of the country (Causeni and Cantemir), were supported financially and non-reimbursable for a total amount of 1.73 million MDL. The contribution of young entrepreneurs in these investment projects was covered by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and amounted to about 380,000 MDL.

⁸⁷ The program's purpose is to ensure access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises for investment projects by partially compensating the interest rate on investment loans offered by banks.

⁸⁸ Order no. 138/2023 on the approval of the Action Plan for the development and piloting of the process of development and piloting of the Specialized Professional Parental Assistance Service for children with severe disabilities: <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Ordin-nr.-138-22.09.2023.pdf>, Order no. 168/2023 on the approval of the measures for the development and piloting of the Specialized Professional Parental Assistance Service for children with behavioural problems/with complex emotional needs: https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Ordin-MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION 168_APP_copii_comportament.semnat.pdf, Order no. 5/2024 On the approval of the measures for the consolidation of the Social Support Service for families with children: <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Ordin-MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION-nr.-5-din-10.01.2024-consolidarea-Serviciului-sprijin-pentru-familii.pdf>

centres for children aged four months to three *years* in six cities: Chisinau, Bălți, Glodeni, Criuleni, Calarasi, and Rezina.

The government has taken several measures to enable parents to combine their family obligations with professional responsibilities and participation in public life. Thus, in December 2022, the regulatory framework on alternative care options for children up to three years of age was adopted -- care services organised by the employer at the workplace, services provided by childcare providers at the child's home, and services provided for a limited number of children at the caregiver's place.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection launched a website on alternative childcare services, where information and updates related to alternative childcare services can be found. It provides details about current legislation, guidelines for implementing services, and resources for parents and employers⁸⁹.

These measures aim to strengthen the social support system for families with children, thereby ensuring their safety and well-being.

Introducing or consolidating maternity/paternity/parental or other types of family leave

Parliament passed Law no. 241/2023, amending several normative acts to enhance maternity, paternity, and parental leave through the following measures:

- Offers more flexible paternity leaves, allowing fathers to take paternity leave in several instalments;
- Improves and ensures a fair allowance for parents who are working and are on consecutive childcare leave for two or more children. Institutes longer parental leave for parents who are in the process of adoption, have adopted a child, or have placed a child in Guardianship/Custody in their family.
- Provides parental allowances to self-employed workers.
- Increase the period of paid paternity leave from 14 days to 15 days.
- Establishment and payment of the paternal allowance for periods proportional to the actual number of days of paternal leave the father of the child has received.
- Establishing a paid paternity leave for the father of an adopted child.
- Establishing the paternal allowance for a self-employed father working in the legal sector who has adopted a child.

Under the new provisions, as of January 1, 2024, one of the insured parents is entitled to a monthly child-raising allowance from the day following the expiry of maternity leave without the constraint of being on childcare leave until the age of 3.⁹⁰

A new option for paid parental leave will be available from September 1, 2022, to encourage women to return to the labour market.⁹¹

As of January 1, 2024, new types of social insurance benefits were introduced to parents – a one-time allowance for the period of custody of the adopted child, a one-time allowance for the child adopted or placed in foster care, and an allowance for the upbringing of a child over 3 years of age adopted or placed in foster care. As of January 1, 2024, the father of a newborn child is entitled to a paternal leave of up to 15 calendar days.

⁸⁹ <https://social.gov.md/comunicare/lansarea-site-ului-serviciialternative-gov-md-un-nou-pas-catre-imbunatatirea-serviciilor-de-ingrijire-a-copilului-in-republica-moldova/>

⁹⁰ These provisions give parents the opportunity to organise their personal and professional activities according to their own needs, ensuring a balance between professional and personal life, with fair and active involvement in the care and upbringing of children. At the same time, in accordance with the new provisions of Law no. 404/2023 amending some normative acts, as of January 1, 2024, the monthly allowance for child-raising is calculated from the insured income of one of the insured spouses, which will determine a higher amount of the monthly allowance for child-raising.

⁹¹ Payment of 90% of income for a period of 12 months from the date of childcare leave (in addition to the two options of childcare up to the age of 2 and up to the age of 3).

The contribution period includes the non-contributory periods, such as the period of care of a child up to the age of 3 by one of the parents or by a guardian (in the event of the death of both parents), including the period of care of a severely disabled child under the age of 18 or of a person with severe disabilities by one of the parents (by a guardian or by a curator), until hiring a social care worker.

Running awareness-raising campaigns or activities to encourage men and boys to participate in unpaid care and domestic work

In the context of implementing family policies, promoting women's employment, and preventing domestic violence, increased attention is paid to encouraging men to engage in unpaid care and domestic work. This idea is promoted in all national information campaigns on gender equality and prevention of domestic violence.

Men's involvement in changing social gender norms is being supported through various innovative interventions, including the creation of a network of Fathers' Clubs, Father to Boy and peer-to-peer exchange programs, campaigns to combat gender stereotypes, and strengthening the efficiency of systems to promote men's role in pre- and post-natal care.⁹²

Although the regulatory framework for supporting employees with children is quite advanced in the Republic of Moldova, few parents benefit from flexible working arrangements, and few fathers take paternity leave. As a result, many women face an enormous burden when combining work and family life, and consequently, many couples have fewer children than they would like.

The government, in collaboration with the development partners, is organising informational campaigns to support efforts to change these practices and is working with the private sector to create family-friendly workplace policies and expand the opportunities available to women.

For example, the EU-funded regional program "Together Against Gender Stereotypes and Gender-Based Violence" supports gender equality by addressing perceptions of the roles of men and women in the family and society and contributing to the elimination of gender-based violence. Men's gender perceptions, beliefs, and practices can have a positive impact on the lives of women and girls. Men and boys can be essential allies and agents of change and should not be motivated by fear, shame, or guilt but instead by meaningful and long-term positive changes.⁹³

As a positive result of the mentioned programs and other actions, we should note an increasing trend in the number of men taking paternal leave and actively involved in raising and educating children.

8. In the last five years, what steps has your country taken to bridge the digital gender divide? Gender mainstreaming in national digital policies

The Government of the Republic of Moldova's activity program includes digitisation among the 15 sectoral priorities. The National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030," approved by Law No. 315/2022, aligned with both the Association Agreement with the European Union and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations, devotes a particular chapter to the digital transformation of government, society, and economy.

The Republic of Moldova continues to make progress in building the main blocks for a digital economy and society, as attested in multiple recent international and local assessments. The Digital Transformation Strategy 2023-2030 (DTS 2023-2030), in its situation analysis, elucidates some gender aspects. It shows that the proportion of women using the Internet is 2.1% higher than that of men, with

⁹² <https://moldova.unfpa.org/ro/topics/egalitatea-de-gen-%C8%99i-abilitarea-femeilor>

⁹³ <https://moldova.unwomen.org/ro/stories/comunicat-de-presa/2022/12/sa-fii-egal-e-inteligent-30-de-femei-si-barbati-combat-violenta-in-baza-de-gen-printr-un-joc-intelectual>

74.7% and 72.6% respectively. Nonetheless, the use of electronic services among men is about 10% higher than among women.⁹⁴

The "Digital Transformation Readiness Assessment Analysis of the Republic of Moldova" recognises that the country possesses the essential elements for digital transformation yet identifies some weaknesses that need to be addressed. The government and other stakeholders are making significant efforts to ensure an enabling environment for the digital inclusion of women and girls, but there are still obstacles to career advancement. Programs do not always target the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups. Challenges can be identified in the quality and accessibility of ICTs for particularly vulnerable groups (women, rural areas, elderly), which limit their ability to access certain services and hinder the inclusive development of the digital economy. Social and cultural norms play a significant role in the lack of participation of girls and women in STEM education and the ICT sector in Moldova. Accordingly, there is a need to constantly analyse and identify the sources of the digital divide and take systematic measures at a national level to remove inequalities and disparities associated with the dimensions of gender, livelihood, disability, and income.

Programs introduced or strengthened to increase digital literacy and skills of women and girls.

To support businesses in the process of adopting digital technologies, starting from March 2022, ODA is implementing the Program for Digital Transformation of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, approved by Government Decision No. 129/2022. Thus, during 2022-2023, 123 investment projects have been approved for funding under the Program, 54 (44%) of which are managed by women, while the average amount of approved grant is 12,602.51 MDL, which generated a volume of investment in the economy of about 22,871,930 MDL.

Another relevant example is the Women in Online Work Program, which was implemented within the project "Creating Opportunities for Economic Resilience of Women in Local Communities and Displaced Women in Ukraine" by the National Association of ICT Companies (ATIC), with the support of UN Women Moldova and funded by the US Government and the Government of Japan, providing participants with technical skills, career opportunities, mentoring and community support. In 2023, more than 200 women from Moldova and Ukraine participated in the Women in Online Work (WoW) program and gained development opportunities and retraining support.⁹⁵ The courses in Social Media Management, Software Testing, Project Management, and Graphic Design were created to meet the growing demand for these skills in the labour market and to increase the number of girls and women working in these fields. Such programs also help build women's resilience through technology.

Since gaining EU candidate status, Moldova has continued implementing critical reforms in 33 chapters of the Negotiating Framework despite the challenges caused by the conflict in Ukraine. Digitalisation is one of the key elements in the measures taken.

Taking action to promote gender-sensitive STEM education

Gender roles considerably influence the choice of profession. Girls tend to choose majors in the humanities (philology, political science, social sciences, social work, etc.), which are less paid than those in STEM fields, where boys are predominantly enrolled. In terms of undergraduate studies, 10.9% of all girls enrolled in STEM-related subjects are enrolled in higher education, compared to 40.1% of all boys. As for humanities subjects - 84.2% are girls and 54.7% are boys.⁹⁶ This gender segregation is specific to all stages of higher education (vocational, bachelor, master, and doctorate).

⁹⁴ https://mded.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/STD_RO.pdf

⁹⁵ <https://moldova.unwomen.org/ro/stories/reportaj/2024/03/rezilienta-prin-tehnologie-istoria-de-transformare-profesionala-a-unei-femei-refugiate>

⁹⁶ Gender Equality Country Report, Republic of Moldova, 2021. CPD, UNFPA, UN Women, Sweden, p. 3

Several activities have been carried out in this field to encourage Moldovan girls to choose STEM. At the educational system level, the Curriculum Implementation Guide for the optional subject STEM in Forensics was developed and applied to classes VIII-IX and X-XI (RO), as well as the STEM in Forensics Handbook for students of classes VIII-IX and X-XI.

With the support of our development partners (UN, Sweden, etc.), the Tech Women Summit was created – a platform dedicated to women of all ages working in the IT field or enthusiastic women who want to develop a profession in this industry⁹⁷.

More than 100 girls and women from Moldova and Ukraine benefited from free technical training and mentoring sessions as part of the project "Women in Online Work: IT courses for girls and women from Ukraine and Moldova" (WOW), which ran in 2023. The beneficiaries were able to study an IT profession and improve their digital competencies and skills. Among the course graduates, 35% are women from Ukraine.⁹⁸

In recent years, the women's ICT community has developed around the Tekwill project, which has implemented dozens of initiatives in the field. More than 45% of the beneficiaries are women.⁹⁹

As a result, we see a gradual increase in the number of girls in STEM-related subjects: from 20% in 2021/2022 to 22.6% in 2022/2023 (cycle I)¹⁰⁰.

While there has been a positive trend in recent years related to girls choosing to further study and work in STEM fields, we note the importance of expanding positive practices and sustainable support for programs in this field.

9. In the last five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment influenced the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?

In the Republic of Moldova, there is a feminisation of poverty, with women becoming poorer and poorer due to the trend of increasing inequality in living standards between men and women. In 2021, the poverty level among women was 24.7%, and among men - 24.3% (*SDG indicator 1.2.1*). However, poverty affects female-headed and male-headed households with different intensities. The level of poverty in female-headed households was 26.3% or 2.7 percentage points higher than in male-headed households (23.6%).¹⁰¹ Among the main factors contributing to the feminisation of poverty are financial inequalities over the life course, which affect women and men differently at retirement age, and also the fact that the predominant care responsibilities are placed on women.

The **COVID-19** pandemic **exacerbated inequalities related to the division of caring responsibilities**. Caring needs increased substantially during periods of social isolation, and the distribution of roles and tasks in the family continued to be assigned to women, who took on the most demanding work in the household. The closure of educational institutions substantially increased caring responsibilities for parents, especially women. During the COVID-19 crisis, women disproportionately reported taking on the burden of caregiving: over 50% of women devoted more hours to tutoring their children, compared to only 30% of men.

⁹⁷ <https://moldova.un.org/ro/204954-tech-women-summit-platforma-dedicat%C4%83-femeilor-de-orice-v%C3%A2rst%C4%83-care-activeaz%C4%83-%C3%AEn-domeniul-it>

⁹⁸ <https://moldova.unwomen.org/ro/stories/reportaj/2024/03/rezilienta-prin-tehnologie-istoria-de-transformare-profesionala-a-unei-femei-refugiate>

⁹⁹ <https://moldova.un.org/ro/204954-tech-women-summit-platforma-dedicat%C4%83-femeilor-de-orice-v%C3%A2rst%C4%83-care-activeaz%C4%83-%C3%AEn-domeniul-it>

¹⁰⁰ https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Educatia/Educatia_editia_2023.pdf

¹⁰¹ https://statistica.gov.md/index.php/ro/portretul-statistic-al-femeilor-si-barbatilor-in-republica-moldova-9617_60333.html

The crisis has caused an **unprecedented** reduction in **economic activity** and working time. The COVID-19 crisis also caused significant losses in the Republic of Moldova, where more than 20% of workers faced a reduction in working hours. The reduction in hours worked, consequently, had a significant impact on wage income. A quarter of the women who continued to go to work during the quarantine faced a reduction in wages twice as large as that of employed men. At the same time, women faced longer pay delays.¹⁰²

HORECA, tourism, education, and medicine are the fields in which women are found in large numbers, but the COVID-19 pandemic has also hit them the hardest. According to the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization (MDED), the pandemic crisis in Moldova caused a 14% contraction of the national economy in the second quarter of 2020 and 7.2% in the first half of the same year. The economic impact of the pandemic has been felt to a greater extent by women, in particular female entrepreneurs and employees. Almost 60% of those who lost their jobs due to the Covid-19 pandemic were women. Many of the women who were able to keep their jobs suffered considerably from the imbalance between work, family tasks, and unpaid domestic work. The number of cases of domestic violence increased dramatically during the pandemic.¹⁰³

In this context, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova has adopted legislative amendments to redress the situation,¹⁰⁴ through which **they have instituted measures to support businesses** in the context of the epidemiological situation and its effects on the national economy. The amendments are comprised of two main components: measures to directly support entrepreneurship (implementation of the interest subsidy program, VAT refund program) and improving the legislation in the budgetary-fiscal field (including the reduction of the VAT rate from 20% to 15% for the HORECA sector). At the same time, the Parliament adopted a series of laws aimed at **facilitating women's access to the labour market and establishing measures to reconcile work and family life**, aimed at:

- alternative childcare services, which establishes the framework for the creation and functioning of alternative childcare services for children up to 3 years of age;
- pay transparency;
- introducing flexible working hours;
- paternity leave, so the period during which fathers can take paternity leave has been doubled to 15 days.

At the same time, the Government, with the support of development partners, took the following actions:

- implemented retraining programs and adapted vocational training programs (including attracting girls and women in STEM fields), thus facilitating their access to the labour market;
- created childcare infrastructure for children up to 3 years of age (repair works/endowment of daycare groups in public pre-schools, child-friendly spaces at work, etc).

Positive changes in society have taken place as a result of the enactment of many family-friendly legal provisions, including the introduction of flexible working arrangements, greater benefits for childcare for a shorter period, allowing women to return from parental leave earlier, promoting legislation and regulations on alternative childcare services (childcare at employers' place, family-type childcare and individualised childcare services), funding the expansion of childcare through the European Village in

¹⁰² https://moldova.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/RO_Gender%20assessment%2028.04.pdf

¹⁰³ https://moldova.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Raport%20femei_exp%2027%20june.pdf

¹⁰⁴ <https://multimedia.parlament.md/masuri-de-sustinere-a-mediului-de-afaceri-si-populatiei-in-contextul-situatiei-epidemiologice-instituie-de-parlament/>

2024 (20 million MDL has been allocated for the expansion of childcare) and the European Village Express (10 million MDL has been invested for the expansion of childcare in 2023).

As a result, employment increased by 2.8% from 862,300 in 2022 to 886,900 in 2023. Female employment grew by 5.5% (418,600 in 2022 to 441,800 in 2023), while female employment in urban areas grew by the largest proportion in recent years.

Respectively, the number of inactive women fell sharply – 7.7 % in a single year (54300 women made the transition from inactive to active); the number of women caring for family members fell by 16% in a single year – from 156,300 in 2022 to 131,300 in 2023.

Poverty eradication, social protection, and social services

Critical areas of concern:

- A. Women and poverty
- B. Education and training of women
- C. Women and health
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

10. In the last five years, what has your country done to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

Based on national survey data, which finds that women are more at risk of experiencing poverty,¹⁰⁵ During the reporting period, several measures were undertaken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls.

Supporting women's entrepreneurship, access to markets, and business development activities

Policy documents have been developed, and development programs have been initiated to support women's entrepreneurship in the Republic of Moldova. Thus, this topic is expressly included in the National Employment Program for 2022-2026, the Roadmap for Women's Economic Empowerment (version 2.0 updated_12/22), the National Program for Promoting Entrepreneurship and Increasing Competitiveness for 2023-2027, the Program for Supporting Female Entrepreneurship, financed by the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the European Union, the Program of Subsidies in Agriculture for Young Farmers, Women Farmers, Returned Migrants or those managing farming households, etc.

A relevant example is the project "Export Capacity Building on the banks of the Dniester River" (AdTrade) implemented by the UN with the financial support of Sweden and the United Kingdom during 2019-2025. The AdTrade project (three editions) assists micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in developing and increasing their export potential. Along the way, dozens of MSMEs have received financial support, which has helped them start their own business and help existing companies expand their production capacities, diversify their activities, and become more competitive. The results of this projects included 76 businesses/new companies being created, of which women ran more than 60% of the companies, around 2,000 business community representatives/leaders were trained, more than 500 women and girls were trained in digital literacy in 5 STEAM (science, technology, engineering, entrepreneurship, arts, and math), and a freelancing school for women was created¹⁰⁶. Through the project, 249 jobs were created, 160 of which for women and 98 for disadvantaged people, and 1,370 jobs were preserved in the context of the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁰⁵ Gender Equality Country Report. Republic of Moldova, 2021. CPD, UNFPA, UN Women, Sweden, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.undp.org/ro/moldova/projects/dezvoltarea-capacitatilor-de-export-pe-malurile-nistrului>

Another project funded by Sweden – "Sustainable Communities and Climate Resilience through Women's Empowerment" (2020-2024), helped 854 households led by women and male entrepreneurs (665 women and 189 men) in the agricultural sector improve their capacity in green business management through 35 training courses organised in all target districts and regions¹⁰⁷.

The above activities and other programs, orientated towards supporting women's entrepreneurship, access to markets, and business development activities, contribute to the prevention/reduction of poverty among women and girls.

Introduce or strengthen social protection programs for women and girls (e.g. cash transfers for women with children, public works/employment guarantee schemes for women of working age, pensions for older women)

In order to implement the National Program for Child Protection for 2022-2026 and its Action Plan, which also provides for some specific measures to reduce child poverty in 2022 to strengthen the child protection system, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Children's Fund on providing technical assistance to enhance the child protection system, including social services in this purpose.

According to the envisaged Memorandum and the RWP, it was stipulated the allocation of financial sources for some social assistance measures established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, financed from UNICEF sources, to be implemented by local public administration authorities and aimed at:

- financial support from the social service "Support for families with children";
- employing personal assistants for children with disabilities, including refugees (PA);
- financial support for professional parental assistants, parent-educators, and children placed in professional parental assistance (PPA) and family-type children's homes (CCTF);
- developing new professional parenting support (PPS) services;
- granting bonuses for some categories of social assistance staff.

In light of the Memorandum and the RWP, we emphasise the allocation of more than 230 million MDL in 2023 to ensure the sustainability of the social service "Support for families with children".

In accordance with the provisions of *Government Decision no. 889/2013 for the approval of the Framework Regulation on the organisation and functioning of the social support service for families with children* and *Government Decision no. 780/2014 on the approval of the Minimum Quality Standards on the Social Support Service for Families with Children*, the local public administration authorities ensured the provision of financial assistance within the social service "Support for Families with Children" for each child in the family, including refugee children, through a lump-sum payment or monthly payment, in accordance with the needs identified in the complex assessment and in the individual assistance plan, submitted by the case manager, within the financial means allocated for each administrative-territorial unit.

According to the established procedures, based on the administrative act issued by the head of the territorial social assistance structure, within the financial means established for each administrative-territorial unit, the monthly financial supplement for children placed in APP and CCTF was established and granted in the amount of 1,025 MDL per child and 1,332 MDL per child with disabilities (the difference from the amount of the monthly allowance granted, according to the calculated average

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.undp.org/ro/moldova/projects/comunitati-durabile-si-reziliente-la-schimbari-climatice-prin-abilitarea-femeilor>

indicator of the minimum subsistence). As a result, during the five implementation tranches, 1,009 children benefited, of which about 13.5% were children with disabilities.

At the same time, the daily allowance was increased (Government Decision no. 149/2023) for children placed in the services of professional parental assistance, family-type children's homes, guardianship/guardianship, community homes for children at risk and placement centres for children separated from their parents. The increases amounted to:

- on ordinary days, from 15 MDL to 20 MDL;
- on the child's birthday, from 129 MDL to 167 MDL;
- on public holidays, from 92 MDL to 119 MDL.

It is also important to note that for 2024, the childbirth allowance¹⁰⁸ has been increased (practically doubled) and amounts to 20,000 MDL; the regulatory framework has been amended in this regard.

11. In the last five years, what has your country done to improve women's and girls' access to social protection?

Introduce or strengthen cash transfers for families with children that prioritise women as recipients (e.g. child allowances, family allowances, conditional or unconditional cash transfers)

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection has developed several policies to support families in need. Social assistance measures are carried out through personalised, preventive, or ongoing programs and actions, organised and guaranteed by the central and local public administration authorities, as well as by other civil society bodies or organisations.

At the same time, some policies have been developed to support families in need and are implemented through local public authorities. Social assistance measures are carried out through tailor-made, preventive or ongoing programs and actions, organised and guaranteed by central and local public administration authorities, as well as other civil society bodies or organisations.

We bring to your attention the normative acts approved in the last two years related to policies to support children and families with children.¹⁰⁹

From September 1, 2022, new options for entitlement to the monthly parental allowance are applicable in the following formulas:

- from the date on which childcare leave is granted until the child reaches the age of 1 year, up to 90% of income for the first 12 months;
- from the date on which childcare leave is granted until the child reaches the age of 2 years, at the rate of 60% of income for the first 12 months and 30% of revenue for the following 12 months;
- from the date on which childcare leave is granted until the child reaches the age of 3 years, up to 30% of income.

At the same time, starting September 1, 2022, the period during which fathers can apply for paternal leave has been extended from 56 days to 12 months after the birth of the child.

¹⁰⁸ Government Decision no. 1478/2002 on allowances for families with children

¹⁰⁹ Law no. 370/2023 on the Rights of the Child: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=140710&lang=ro, Government Decision no. 347/2022 on the Approval of the National Programme for Child Protection for 2022-2026 and its Action Plan: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=131899&lang=ro, Government Decision no. 81/2023 on the Approval of the Framework Regulation on the Establishment of custody and ensuring the organization and functioning of the Guardianship/Custody Service: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=136348&lang=ro, Government Decision no. 48/2023 on the Approval of the Minimum Quality Standards for the Social Service Day Care Centre for children, aged 4 months -3 years: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135594&lang=ro, Government Decision no. 519/2022 on the Approval of the Regulation on the Organization and Functioning of the Free Telephone Assistance Service for Children and the Minimum Quality Standards: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=132993&lang=ro, Government Decision no. 446/2022 on the Approval of the Concept of the Information System in the Field of Child Protection: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=132016&lang=ro.

From March 1, 2023, maternity allowance is payable for the period of maternity leave that overlaps with the period during which the woman earned an insured income.

Starting from January 1, 2024, the monthly allowance for raising a child to 3 years of age is payable to one of the insured parents without the condition of being on childcare leave. Maternity allowance is calculated from the insured income of one of the spouses, which determines a higher amount of maternity allowance.

Introducing or strengthening social protection for older women (e.g., extension of social pensions, moratorium, inflation adjustment, introduction of pension credits for careers in specific occupations)

In the Republic of Moldova, in the last six years, the number of people aged 60 and over has increased by more than 4%. They currently represent around 24% of the country's population, with women comprising more than 60%.¹¹⁰ Older women are more exposed to economic vulnerability.¹¹¹ The National Program on Active and Healthy Ageing for 2023-2027 and its Action Plan provide for the full integration and participation of older people (women and men) in social life and the development of social security, health, education, etc. systems in line with the principle of active ageing.

Under the current social insurance system, the size of the pension depends on the total period of employment (contribution period) and the salary from which social insurance contributions have been paid, regardless of the place of residence (urban or rural), the position held, the nature of work, the importance of the field of activity, or other criteria. Indexation, which is specific in that it is annual, permanent, and compulsory, periodically adjusts the size of state social security pensions. Thus, on April 1, 2023, pensions and some state social benefits were indexed with the 15% indexation coefficient, taking into account the percentage increase in the state social insurance budget's own revenues in 2022 compared to 2021.

At the same time, persons who have worked after the establishment of the pension are entitled to have their pension reviewed in instalments, according to a set schedule, depending on the year of the pension establishment and the contribution period completed.

The social protection response to the pandemic was influential. Since 2020, an allowance has been established for the survivors of deceased medical personnel who died as a result of medical work in the fight against COVID-19, with women constituting the majority. The beneficiaries are the surviving spouse, for 5 years from the date of the death of the breadwinner, children up to the age of 18 or, if they continue their studies in day schools (secondary, specialised, secondary and higher education), until they complete their studies, without exceeding the age of 23. If there are no children from these categories, the allowance is paid to one of the parents. The allowance is calculated using the average monthly income realised and declared in the last 12 calendar months preceding the month of death. The surviving spouse's allowance is calculated at 50% of the calculation basis, and the children's allowance is calculated at 75% of the calculation basis for each surviving child.

12. In the last five years, what steps has your country taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls?

Expanded specific health services for women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health, maternal health, and HIV health.

¹¹⁰ https://statistica.gov.md/index.php/ro/varstnicii-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2022-9578_60729.html

¹¹¹ [https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/894_Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.pdf](https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/894_Ministry%20of%20Labour%20and%20Social%20Protection.pdf)

During the reporting period, the Republic of Moldova has undertaken several actions to improve health outcomes for women and girls in the country. In the Republic of Moldova, access to reproductive health services is guaranteed under compulsory health care insurance. The network of Youth Friendly Health Centres (YFHC/YK) is organised to ensure adolescents and young people have access to reproductive health and family planning services. During 2022, within the YFHC/YK network, 234,784 young people received medical and psychological consultations, including 57,579 beneficiaries from rural areas. 71% of the total number of beneficiaries were adolescents and young people aged 10-24 years, and 64% - girls and women.

The National Program for the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections (NP) in 2022-2025 includes specific actions for the prevention, testing, and treatment of HIV infection, including girls and women at higher risk of infection.¹¹² This National Program has been subject to gender equality expertise. Access to HIV prevention services among girls and women is equal to that of men. HIV prevention services are gradually being integrated into state funding of services. During 2023, 5.9% were funded, which constitutes 500 sex workers out of 8464 people who received HIV prevention services. In accordance with the National Clinical Protocol No. 313/ 2023 HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, upon request, female sex workers can receive PREP along with men. Women and girls are counselled and, if necessary, referred to youth-friendly centres or family planning clinics for free contraception. The program has introduced an attractive package of free diagnosis and treatment services for 4 sexually transmitted infections. All female sex workers benefiting from prevention projects have free access to testing for syphilis, HIV, HCV, and HBV. Universal access to HIV and STI testing for pregnant women has been ensured. All HIV-infected women benefit from free medical diagnostic and treatment services.

With the support of UNAIDS Moldova, in 2023, a theory of change on ensuring the rights of female sex workers was elaborated, which includes aspects of inclusion and social protection of female sex workers. The theory of change sets the vision, strategic priorities, long-term outcomes, and multidisciplinary and intersectoral areas of intervention. The development of the theory of change¹¹³ was justified by the need to implement the latest recommendations of the UN Specialized Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as well as by the data on the phenomenon and the worrying situation of women in this group collected in several operational researches. The theory of change was discussed in a national dialogue by representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Ministry of Education and Research, as well as members of civil society and development partners.¹¹⁴ The mobilisation of resources for the practical implementation of the given document is still being done.

Gender-sensitive approaches to the prevention and treatment of chronic and non-communicable diseases (e.g. cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes) have been developed.

¹¹² One of the 3 groups at increased risk of infection is people who use intravenous drugs, and in 2022, 3464 women benefited from HIV prevention services, which is 20.1% of the total number of beneficiaries. Another group at risk of HIV infection is sex workers, and in 2023, 8464 women benefited from HIV prevention services, which is 100% of the total number of beneficiaries.

¹¹³ The Theory of Change followed the implementation of a national campaign to raise awareness among the authorities and the population about sex work and sex workers' rights called "Beyond Appearances" and the empowerment of 200 female commercial sex workers through training and mentoring. The document is expected to contribute to a better understanding of sex work in the country, human rights violations and a shared understanding of change so that no one is left behind, including social inclusion and protection.

¹¹⁴ The exercise was supported by UNAIDS, UN Women and UNFPA on December 14, 2023.

In the Republic of Moldova, cervical cancer remains a significant public health problem.¹¹⁵ The National Cancer Control Program for 2016-2025, developed under the European guidelines on cancer control, aims to reduce the burden of cancer on society. We mention the organisation of the national communication campaign "Keep healthy! Do the cytology test!" aimed at informing girls and women, as well as their families, about cervical cancer prevention measures.

According to the National Agency for Public Health, in 2022, the incidence of breast cancer in the Republic of Moldova was 51.5 cases per 100,000 inhabitants; 1307 cases detected primary.¹¹⁶ Services for the prevention and early detection of breast gland cancer are provided at the level of primary health care and are focused on counselling and risk factor management, education of women with self-examination of the mammary glands at any age, clinical and ultrasonographic examination of persons from the age of 18 years, detection of localised pathology in the mammary glands, and mammography is performed after 35 years. In 2022, breast screening services were organised in rural areas; 5302 women were examined, 402 of whom were readmitted to the mammologist with suspected precancerous and cancerous diseases. Also in 2022, the municipal authorities launched the Municipal Mammography Breast Cancer Screening Program for 2022-2025, which aims to create mammography clinics in the 5 municipal Territorial Medical Associations for screening and early detection of breast cancer, among other things, by equipping them with high-performance mammography machines and informing the population about the availability of these services. We should consistently take these measures, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups.

Gender-sensitive health awareness/promotion campaigns have been undertaken

During the reporting period, increased attention was paid to informing the population through multiple health awareness/promotion campaigns. National campaigns/actions dedicated to breast cancer prevention, promotion of healthy lifestyles, World HIV/AIDS Day, World Diabetes Day, World Stroke Prevention Day, World Obesity Day, etc., have become traditional. Gender aspects are reflected in informative materials, messages through social networks and mass media, and informational-educational activities with different groups of the population.

According to the media monitoring report submitted by the Youth Media Center, in 2022, 107,052 women and men were informed about the importance of family planning and modern methods of contraception through social media channels. For this purpose, with the support of UNFPA in Moldova and other partners, videos were produced and widely distributed through social media channels. Numerous live and informational-educational videos dedicated to the prevention of clandestine abortion and possible complications were organised and placed on the CIDSR YouTube page. Materials to inform the community about available safe abortion services, including where to access them during emergencies, are placed on the CIDSR websites www.cidsr.md and www.avort.md.

In 2023, in a joint effort to increase the immunisation rate among the population, the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with UNICEF Moldova, the National Agency for Public Health, and the Centre for Health Strategies and Policies, launched the community information and mobilisation campaign with the motto "Help me fight infections".

¹¹⁵ The country's healthcare system provides free access to services such as cytology testing and vaccination against human papillomavirus (HPV) infection. Women, age 25-61, both insured and uninsured, can see their family doctor and have a cytology test every three years. Regular cervical screening, which includes cytology and colposcopy, can detect precancerous lesions and cervical cancer at an early stage. As a result of the implementation of the screening programs established by the health authorities, there are positive trends in the early detection of cervical cancer cases, which are successfully treated. Over 300 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer every year in the Republic of Moldova.

¹¹⁶ <https://cnas.gov.md/libview.php?l=ro&idc=360&id=6585&t=/Mass-media/Noutati/Masuri-de-prevenire-depistare-precoc-a-cancerului-mamar-la-CNAS>

These and other actions have contributed to increasing women's, girls', and men's awareness of health-related rights and services. At the same time, information and communication activities are to be expanded, with a focus on gender needs and the inclusion of different population groups.

13. In the last five years, what has your country done to improve educational outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented?

Promoting safe, harassment-free, and inclusive educational environments for women and girls

The legal framework regulating the field of education in the Republic of Moldova is provided by the Education Code No. 152/2014, which mentions "promoting intercultural dialogue, the spirit of tolerance, non-discrimination and social inclusion." Lifelong learning and facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life for men and women are also recognised as missions of education.

Law no. 36/2022 on the amendment of the Education Code no. 152/2014 amended articles 3, 7, and 136 introduced the concept of bullying – a form of aggression that is manifested intentionally, repeatedly and through imbalance of power in relations between children, pupils/students or students/students and refers to those behaviours in which a child, pupil/student, student/student or a group, hurts, harms, causes suffering, helplessness or harms human dignity. In 2022, the Ministry of Education and Research developed and approved the Methodology for preventing and combating bullying by Order No. 1024/2022 of the Minister of Education and Research.

The "Education 2030" strategy prioritises ensuring a healthy and safe environment that is resistant to social, political, economic, and pandemic challenges¹¹⁷. The education system is recognised as a determining factor in the formation of a peaceful and safe society through anti-violence education at all levels, resilience skills training during schooling, and reduction of violence (bullying) in education.

The Ministry of Education and Research is part of the Intersectoral Cooperation Mechanism for the identification, assessment, referral, assistance, and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of neglect, violence, exploitation, and trafficking (Government Decision no. 270/2014).¹¹⁸

In the context of the mentioned documents and the unfortunate background of the increase in bullying cases in all general education schools and most vocational-technical schools, various activities were organised to inform students about bullying, gender-based violence, the system of reporting these cases, and the support services available. With the support of the development partners (UN, OSCE, Sweden, ADA, SDC, etc.), training has been organised for teachers and managers of the institutions to prevent, report, and refer these cases.

In-service training for managers and teachers takes place annually. As a result, the skills of teachers and managers of several institutions in dealing with bullying and other forms of violence have been improved, consequently improving the preconditions of a safe, educational environment for girls and boys. Similarly, the infrastructure of several academic institutions has been adjusted to the needs of children/pupils/students (girls, boys, and persons with special needs), providing a safe, non-violent, and inclusive educational environment.

At the same time, we reiterate the existence of shortcomings in this area, such as the persistence of patriarchal stereotypes that generate toxic masculinity, the reluctance of society to deal with sexual harassment, the low involvement of parents in dealing with these cases, etc. Therefore, positive practices should be extended, and internal prevention and management mechanisms should be strengthened.

¹¹⁷ https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/subiect-02-nu-900-mec-2022_1.pdf

¹¹⁸ According to this judgment, authorities and institutions with competence for the protection of children's rights at all levels are obliged to cooperate to prevent all forms of violence against children and to react promptly to any suspicious signs of violence against children. The generalised reports on suspected cases of abuse are placed on the Ministry's official website - <https://mec.gov.md/ro/content/prevenirea-si-combaterea-violentei-0>

Measures have been taken to increase girls' access to, retention in, and completion of technical and vocational education, training, and skills development programs.

In the Republic of Moldova, the share of girls in vocational-technical schools in the total number of students in the reporting period is over 45%. Girls predominate in post-secondary technical vocational education, and boys in secondary technical vocational education. Also of interest is the distribution by field: girls are predominantly in service and care occupations, whereas boys are in technical occupations. Girls opt more for higher education.¹¹⁹

Career guidance activities are carried out in several secondary schools to increase the attractiveness of technical vocational education for girls and boys. At the same time, multiple programs have been implemented at the system level with the support of development partners.¹²⁰

Other positive examples are the EDUTech Labs, learning spaces offering non-formal and formal education activities, recreational activities such as music, drawing, sports games, chess competitions, Romanian, English, and STEM lessons, and support for students connecting to the Ukrainian Ministry of Education platforms developed for children learning at a distance due to the war.¹²¹

These programmes create a friendly educational environment for girls and boys and encourage them to stay in the system and develop personally and professionally.

Increased access to skills and training in new and emerging fields, especially STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and digital fluency and literacy

During the reporting period, UN Women, in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Economy, together with international organisations, the business sector, and civil society, continue to support the promotion of digital literacy of women and girls. These efforts are focused on empowering Moldovan girls with skills and tools in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) fields and encourage them to opt for a career in these fields in the future.

Programs such as Girls Go IT, Choose a Career in IT, Women in Science have helped to increase girls' enrolment in STEM subjects. As a result, we are seeing a gradual increase in the number of girls in STEM subjects: from 20% in 2021/2022 to 22.6% in 2022/2023 (cycle I).¹²²

With USAID's support over the years, more than 200 robotics clubs have been opened across the country, with another 50 to be created in 2024.¹²³

In order to facilitate the access of young people to STEM fields, the following actions have been integrated into the National Employment Program for 2022-2026:

- 1) Encouraging and promoting gender equality in "masculinised" sectors and professions, with a particular focus on technical, ecological and innovation fields;
- 2) Guiding young women and young men in professional careers from a gender perspective;
- 3) Informing on the advantages of professional careers in feminised and masculinised fields.

¹¹⁹ https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/subject-02-nu-900-mec-2022_1.pdf p.20

¹²⁰ With the support of the UN and donor funding (Austrian Development Agency, ADA), the Ministry of Education and Research implemented projects for young people to increase knowledge and awareness on the use of modern methods of contraception, preventing teenage pregnancy, preventing and reporting violence/harassment and sexual abuse and other behavioural risks, as well as on existing support services for young people and the importance of life skills for their preparation for the workplace - <https://moldova.unfpa.org/ro/news/elevii-din-%C3%AEnv%C4%83%C8%9B%C4%83m%C3%A2ntul-profesional-tehnic-vor-deprinde-abil%C4%83%C8%9Bi-de-via%C8%9B%C4%83-prin-intermediul-0>

¹²¹ At the national level, 81 EDUTech labs have been created, equipped with modern IT equipment, and teachers are trained in child protection, inclusive education and prevention of gender-based violence, how to provide psychosocial first aid, report cases of child abuse and neglect, receiving training in IT and innovative digital learning.

¹²² https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Educatia/Educatia_editia_2023.pdf

¹²³ <https://mec.gov.md/ro/content/dan-perciun-s-intalnit-cu-elevii-care-vor-reprezenta-tara-noastra-la-olimpiada-mondiala-de>

The topic is included in the Roadmap for Women's Economic Empowerment (version 2.0 updated_12/22).¹²⁴

14. What steps has your country taken to ensure that the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic reduces the gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Republic of Moldova went through a period of quarantine, imposing restrictive measures that resulted in the closure of businesses, public institutions, schools, as well as flight cancellations. Mandatory restrictions and preventive measures were imposed, and citizens learned how to adapt to a new normality.

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic is much more than just a health crisis: it has affected the lives of every citizen, the entire country and almost every aspect of its social and economic life. The financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been significant – estimated at 3.4% of GDP in 2020.¹²⁵ The decrease in GDP in 2020 (-7.3%) was due to the COVID-19 pandemic but was followed by a significant rebound in 2021 (14.8%). The Government of the Republic of Moldova has implemented multiple initiatives and strategies to achieve this goal.¹²⁶

To provide immediate and long-term support to the Republic of Moldova for the COVID-19 socio-economic response and recovery, UN Moldova, in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Moldova, prepared the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan (2020) based on the impact assessments carried out. The plan was intended to reduce the country's vulnerability to the pandemic, allowing for a transparent and efficient recovery process, respecting human rights, and gender mainstreaming. The socio-economic response framework consists of five strategic pillars to protect the needs and rights of people living under the effects of the pandemic, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable and marginalised groups and individuals and those at risk of being left behind: health prioritisation, protecting people, economic response and recovery, macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration, social cohesion and community resilience. The Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan was focused on supporting the Government of the Republic of Moldova to address, among other things, the health emergency, the social and economic impact of the pandemic and to contribute to the principle of leaving no one behind (LNOB). The total budget of the plan is USD 106 million, of which USD 12 million has been identified with the support of 18 donors. The plan contains 99 projects and actions through over 40 partnerships.¹²⁷

At the same time, in 2022, due to the overlapping crises - drought, energy crisis, disruptions to trade routes, and rising cost of living - the economy contracted, with GDP falling by 5.9%. This, combined with the disruptions generated by the armed conflict in Ukraine, revealed the country's vulnerability to external shocks. Moreover, the large share of agriculture in the country's economy, a sector heavily dependent on adverse weather conditions, the continued massive migration of the labour force, and the dependence on remittance revenues add further layers of vulnerability.

The high prevalence of the informal economy and tax evasion negatively affect both government revenues and the redistribution of value generated in the economy. This can also harm investment in infrastructure and public services, thus affecting the quality of life for the majority of the population.

The annual growth rate of GDP per person employed varied significantly between 2015 and 2022, with declines in 2020 and 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, drought, energy crisis, and impact of the

¹²⁴ https://consecon.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FP_-Abilitarea-Economica-Femeilor_12.12.22_FIN.Actualizata.pdf

¹²⁵ https://moldova.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/raport_de_progres_odd_2023_vf_15_09_2023_final.pdf p.43

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 116

¹²⁷ <https://moldova.md/ro/content/onu-moldova-si-guvernul-republicii-moldova-au-elaborat-un-plan-actualizat-de-raspuns-si>

war in Ukraine on international trade. Several initiatives and reforms have been undertaken to improve this indicator. Among them, two programs were updated: the Greening of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Program and the Program to Support Businesses with High Potential for Growth and Internationalization. Amendments were also approved to the laws on small and medium-sized enterprises, combating unfair trade practices and preventing food loss and waste. It should be noted that these initiatives may take time to have a full impact on the economy and labour productivity.¹²⁸

In this context, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova has adopted legislative amendments to redress the situation.¹²⁹ By which **they have instituted measures to support businesses** in the context of the epidemiological situation and its effects on the national economy, on two components, namely: measures to directly support entrepreneurship (implementation of the interest subsidy program, VAT refund program) and amendment of some normative acts, which aims to improve the legislation in the budgetary-fiscal field (including the reduction of the VAT rate from 20% to 15% for the HORECA sector).

Against the background of the problems identified, the National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030" focuses on income growth, with an emphasis on sustainability, and seeks to develop opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship, which are essential components of economic growth.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova has approved by Government Decision No. 846/2022 the Program for the Prevention and Management of Emergency and Exceptional Situations for 2022-2025. The aim of the Program is focused on optimising the interaction and strengthening the capacities of local and central public administration authorities in the field of emergency and exceptional situations management, which will enable the country to better respond not only to emergency and extraordinary situations but also to other shocks and stresses, such as COVID-19 pandemic, energy crisis, regional conflicts, refugee crisis, natural/technical emergency and exceptional situations with cross-border effects, etc. The development of the prevention, preparedness, and response capacities of the civil protection system of the Republic of Moldova will also ensure the provision of quality state services to citizens, which will contribute to reducing the number of casualties and damage caused by emergencies/exceptional situations.

Freedom from violence, stigma, and stereotypes

Critical areas of concern:

- D. Violence against women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- L. The girl child

15. In the last five years, what forms of gender-based violence and in what specific contexts or settings have been prioritised for action in your country?

During the reporting period, according to the national and institutional policy documents, the State prioritised the following forms of gender-based violence: domestic violence, violence against women, sexual violence and protection and assistance to victims of sexual violence, domestic violence and sexual harassment, and trafficking in children and girls.

The priorities have been determined based on the results of studies and analyses carried out in the field.

According to the OSCE study, about 73% of women in the Republic of Moldova have been subjected to at least one form of intimate partner violence at some point in their lives. Psychological violence is the

¹²⁸ https://moldova.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/raport_de_progres_odd_2023_vf_15_09_2023_final.pdf, p.117

¹²⁹ <https://multimedia.parlament.md/masuri-de-sustinere-a-mediului-de-afaceri-si-populatiei-in-contextul-situatiei-epidemiologice-instituie-de-parlament/>

most common form of violence - 71%, followed by physical violence - 33%,¹³⁰ which is well above the EU average. The OSCE study found that domestic violence is common in Moldova, and the impact of violence can be severe and long-lasting.

According to official statistics, 1510 cases of domestic violence occurred in 2023. Data analysis shows that, as a result of violent actions committed by aggressors within the family, victims of offences (qualified under art. 201/1; art. 201/2; art. 145; art. 171; art. 172) became: - 1035 women; - 288 children; - 187 men¹³¹.

Analogous to the situation in ordinary life, women and girls more frequently face violence online. Sexist language, harassment, and persecution are among the means often used against women and girls on social networks.

We reiterate that Law no. 45/2007 on preventing and combating domestic violence stipulates the following terms: domestic violence, physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, spiritual violence, and economic violence.¹³² During the reporting period, adjustments were made to the national normative framework regarding the introduction of new notions: "violence against women", "adult victim", and "child victim".

In 2023, the National Program on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for 2023-2027 was approved, which is based on the understanding of violence against women as gender-based violence and encompasses all forms of violence covered by the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). The program is anchored on the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention: prevention, protection and assistance to victims, prosecution and holding perpetrators accountable, and multi-sectoral cooperation through integrated policies and data collection. Intervention actions have been structured accordingly.

From 2023, data on domestic violence and sexual violence in the healthcare sector are disaggregated by age and sex of the victim, residence, persons with special needs, and victim-offender ratio.

At the same time, by Law no. 316/2022, amendments were made to art. 109 of the Criminal Code, namely the non-admission of the removal of criminal liability as a result of the reconciliation of the victim with the offender in the case of sexual offences, except for minor or less severe crimes, if committed by minors. Therefore, under art. 109 of the Criminal Code, the criminal prosecution authorities are obliged to investigate the possible infractions as a matter of priority, notwithstanding the withdrawal of statements or complaint by the alleged victim. By the above-mentioned law, Art. 60 of the Code of Criminal Procedure was supplemented with a new paragraph listing the specific rights of the injured party in criminal cases concerning offences of a sexual nature, domestic violence, trafficking in human beings or child trafficking. In the same vein, Art. 113 stipulates that the confrontation of victims/injured parties with the suspect or accused person shall be carried out with the consent of the victims/injured parties in the presence of their lawyer and, where appropriate, with the participation of a psychologist. In the absence of the consent of the victim or injured party, the confrontation may take place on the basis of a reasoned order of the public prosecutor, citing circumstances that are important for establishing the truth and which cannot be dealt with in any other way. The order for a confrontation may be appealed to the investigating judge.

¹³⁰ OSCE (2019), Study "Women's well-being and safety in the Republic of Moldova", Chisinau, p. 101.

https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/f/425867_0.pdf

¹³¹ https://politia.md/sites/default/files/nota_informativa_privind_fenomenul_violentei_in_familie_12_luni_2023.pdf

¹³² https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=110200&lang=ro

To ensure the effective enforcement of protection orders through the electronic monitoring by probation bodies of persons who commit acts of domestic violence at the stage of application by the court of protective measures for the victim, the mechanism of electronic monitoring of domestic aggressors was established by Law no. 85/2020. The new instrument also allows the victim and her family members to be electronically monitored by an electronic surveillance system (such as a small GSM phone) only if they give their written consent. Following an analysis of statistical data, it was found that during 2020, the recidivism rate of family offenders amounted to $\approx 50\%$. In 2021, since the implementation of electronic monitoring for domestic abusers, the recidivism rate decreased to 19%.

We note, as a positive development, that in February 2022, the mechanism for monitoring and analysing cases of domestic violence resulting in death or serious bodily harm to the victims was established by a joint order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Prosecutor General's Office, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, and Ministry of Education and Research.¹³³ The Commission for Monitoring and Analyzing Cases of Domestic Violence Resulting in Death or Serious Bodily Harm to the Victims has been set up to implement this mechanism. The Commission only analyses cases of murder of women committed by an intimate partner or a family member.

In 2022, the first Report analysing cases of domestic violence resulting in death or serious bodily injury of victims¹³⁴ was produced, which found 24 women victims of domestic violence offences, with serious injuries, 45 women, and in 2023, 21 women were killed, and 37 women with serious injuries. In 2024, following cases of the sudden death of women, civil society organisations (Women's Law Center, National Coalition "Life without Violence", Platform for Gender Equality, etc.) put forward on the agenda of the day the official recognition of the term femicide¹³⁵, which was included in the special law based on the legislative initiative. The proposals entered into force on August 15.

At the same time, the Law on Advertising No.62/2022 in Art.7 prohibits sexist advertising. The Code of Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of Moldova No. 174/2018 in art.18 "Gender Equality" prohibits the use in audiovisual media services of sexist language and scenes of violence and degrading behaviour towards women and men. The Audiovisual Council of the Republic of Moldova has drafted the Code of Ethics of Journalists of the Republic of Moldova, which includes commitments related to the avoidance of discrimination based on gender, age, disability, religion, social status, and sexual orientation.

16. In the last five years, what actions has the country prioritised to tackle gender-based violence?

Laws introduced or strengthened on violence against women and their application and implementation

The Republic of Moldova ratified the Istanbul Convention in October 2021, which entered into force in May 2022. During the reporting period, multiple adjustments were made to the national regulatory framework.¹³⁶

¹³³ <https://mai.gov.md/sites/default/files/Comisia%20cazuri%20de%20violenta/89-22-172-56-20-121%2028.02.2022.pdf>

¹³⁴ <https://cdf.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/raport-letalitate-ro-final-2.pdf>

¹³⁵ <https://cdf.md/aparitii/viata-fara-violenta-in-familie-este-possibila-in-moldova-consolidarea-coalitieii-nationale-viata-fara-violenta-in-familie/>

¹³⁶ Electronic monitoring of family aggressors has been included at the stage of court application of victim protection measures (including the possibility for the victim as well as her family members to be electronically monitored by an electronic surveillance system such as a GSM phone with their written consent); the territorial social assistance system has been strengthened by establishing a service responsible for the field of preventing and combating domestic violence; the protection of the victim has been strengthened by carrying out the assessment and management of the risk of repetition/committing acts of domestic violence by professionals from the police, social welfare and health sectors; the concept of state-guaranteed emergency legal aid has been extended by providing 24/24 emergency legal aid to victims of domestic violence and sexual offenses at the complaint stage, and the right to qualified legal aid regardless of income level has been ensured for the following categories: victims of crimes of torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, victims of trafficking in human beings,

In order to strengthen the procedural guarantees for victims of domestic violence but also to ensure efficient instrumentation of the given cases, the Parliament adopted Law no. 316/2022 on the amendment of some normative acts (guaranteeing the rights of victims in the case of offences related to sexual life and domestic violence) which entered into force on 09.01.2023¹³⁷.

To strengthen the prompt response to cases of sexual violence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has elaborated and promoted the draft Government Decision no. 223/2023, "On the approval of the Methodology and Instructions for the work of the intervention team in cases of sexual violence".

Introduce, update, or extend national action plans on ending violence against women and girls.

Government Decision no. 332/2023 approved the National Program on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence for 2023-2027. The Program intervenes through 4 general objectives translated into 90 specific actions. The implementation of the Program aims to reduce the prevalence of all forms of violence against women and domestic violence by 2027, accompanied by an increase in the number of cases reported to the police, criminal cases filed, and convictions for acts of violence. Emphasis is placed on early intervention and prevention of violence so that fewer women end up in crises and each victim and their children receive the support they need at the right time to make a long-term difference in their lives. The budget for the implementation of the Program is 19.8 million MDL, of which 4.0 million MDL are from the state budget and 15.8 million MDL from development partners' sources.

The methodological operational framework for practitioners has been strengthened.¹³⁸

Measures introduced or strengthened to increase women's access to justice (e.g. establishment of specialised courts, training for the judiciary and police, protection orders, reparations, including for femicide cases)

Since the entry into force of Law no. 198/2007 on state-guaranteed legal aid (July 1, 2008), the highest number of legal assistance cases was granted in 2017, with 65 322 cases. In 2022, the second-highest indicator was recorded, with 64 132 cases.¹³⁹

Between 2020 and 2023, 2994 protection orders were issued, 1532 in urban areas and 1462 in rural areas. Emergency restraining orders were applied to domestic abusers, the number of which is decreasing: 2020 - 4250; 2021 - 4939; 2022 - 3907; 2023 - 2721.

victims of domestic violence, victims of crimes concerning sexual life, child victims of crimes, persons with severe or pronounced disabilities, etc. The mechanism for ensuring victims' rights in cases of sexual offences and domestic violence has been improved by amendments/complements to criminal and civil legislation, both substantive and procedural, in order to transpose the provisions of the Istanbul Convention and the Lanzarote Convention: Ensuring the right of victims of crimes related to sexual life and domestic violence to a fair trial (under friendly conditions in the absence of the suspected person; not allowing the removal of criminal liability as a result of the victim's reconciliation with the offender; ensuring the process of investigation of the possible crime in a proactive manner, even if the alleged victim has withdrawn her statements or complaint; social reintegration as effective as possible by receiving medical, forensic, post-trauma psychological assistance and counselling for physical and psychosocial recovery.); criminalisation of cyber-violence in the form of revenge porn, bringing the definition of 'sexual harassment' into line with international human rights standards.

¹³⁷ This law increased the penalty for several sexual offences, as well as for the domestic violence component of the crime.

In addition, a new aggravating factor has been introduced for the crime of domestic violence, which criminalises knowingly committing the crime against a minor or a pregnant woman or taking advantage of the victim's known or apparent helplessness, which is due to old age, illness, disability or other factors.

¹³⁸ Joint Order No 48/298/610/162/5 of 22.06.2022 on the approval of the Instruction on the mechanism of intersectoral cooperation in cases of domestic violence (signatory parties: Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice and the National Council for State Guaranteed Legal Aid); Methodology and Instruction on the work of the intervention team in cases of sexual violence; the inter-institutional mechanism for the analysis and monitoring of cases of domestic violence resulting in death or serious bodily injury of the victims, approved by the Joint Inter-institutional Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Prosecutor General's Office and Ministry of Education and Research, no.89/22/172/172/56/20/121 of 28.02.2022.

¹³⁹ In 2022, there were 50 360 cases of qualified legal aid; the number of beneficiaries was 5% higher than in 2021. Out of this total, in 4 001 cases, emergency legal aid was provided to detained persons (about 8%), in 6 794 cases, beneficiaries were women (about 13.5% of the total volume), in 1324 cases, they had the status of victim/injured party of the crime (about 2.6% of the total volume), of which 1 085 victims of domestic violence and 8 victims of trafficking in human beings - https://cnaigs.md/uploads/asset/file/ro/1799/Raportul_anual_de_activitate_CNAIGS_2022_final_2.pdf

Under Law no. 137/2016¹⁴⁰ The mechanism for financial compensation granted by the state to victims of crime is established, and victims of FV fall into the given category. In 2020-2023, no applications for financial compensation have been submitted by victims of VAW or gender-based crimes.¹⁴¹

At the same time, we mention multiple trainings on gender-based violence, domestic violence, international standards to prevent/combat gender-based violence, protection of victims of GBV for justice and police specialists. These topics are included in the continuous training programs for specialists.

Services introduced or strengthened for survivors of violence (e.g. shelters, helplines, dedicated health services, legal, justice services, counselling, housing, socioeconomic rehabilitation)

There is a comprehensive network of specialised services for victims of violence in the country, including shelters, helplines, family justice centres, regional integrated services, support units in medical institutions, and socio-economic empowerment programs. These services provide coordinated protection and support, including for refugees.¹⁴²

Strategies and interventions introduced or strengthened to prevent violence against women and girls (e.g. in the education sector, in the media, in community mobilisation, and work with men and boys)

Preventing and combating gender-based violence included raising public awareness, innovative approaches for police officers sexual violence intervention teams, adjusting risk assessment methodology, and mainstreaming in sectoral policy documents. Campaigns "16 Days of Activism", "Break the Silence!", #DenimDayMoldova, #Bodyright, and educational activities targeted awareness and protection against gender-based violence, both online and in schools.¹⁴³

17. In the last five years, what strategies has your country used to prevent gender-based violence?

¹⁴⁰ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=139012&lang=ro#

¹⁴¹ The compensation paid by the state only comes into play if it has not been executed on the offender's account.

¹⁴² In the country, there is a network of specialised services providing services for victims of domestic violence and their children: 10 placement centres financed from the state budget, day centres run by non-governmental organisations, the Women and Girls' Helpline 08008008 and the 116111 Child Helpline provided free of charge, confidentially and anonymously, the National Single Emergency Call 112. With the support of development partners, non-commercial organisations, and local authorities, temporary placement centres were organised for refugees from Ukraine. As of 17.01.2024, there were 2318 beneficiaries, including 967 children and 149 persons with disabilities. Ministry of Labour and Social Protection has drafted new Regulations for the Temporary Placement Center for persons displaced from the territory of other states, which provides regulations on protection against violence, discrimination, neglect, exploitation, exploitation, harassment (including sexual), inhuman and/or degrading treatment and/or trafficking in human beings. In the period from 1.03.2023-15.01.2024 in the information system of the General Inspectorate for Migration on temporary protection, 38874 persons were pre-registered in the General Inspectorate for Migration, of which 17145 women aged 0-60+ years. In 2023, the piloting of the Regional Integrated Service for victims of sexual violence in Ungheni, funded by development partners (UN Women), as well as was created in partnership with the U.S. Embassy, the Family Justice Centre in Mun. Chisinau under the auspices of MAI for victims of domestic and sexual violence. In 2022, a Barnahus-type high specialisation service was created in Balti in order to provide children victims/perpetrators of crimes with psychological, legal, medical and social assistance under one roof through immediate, coordinated and professional interventions.

In October 2023, the Network of Support Units in 11 health facilities (First Aid Department) for survivors of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, was launched under the aegis of the Ministry of Health with the support of UNFPA. Thus, women who have been victims of a form of physical and/or sexual violence will receive immediate medical assistance 24/7, as well as psychological support and referral to other services in a unique and safe space within the public health system, avoiding re-victimization in contact with forensic doctors or police.

At the same time, we mention the implementation of socio-economic empowerment programs for survivors of violence by the member organizations of the National Coalition "Life Without Violence".

¹⁴³ In order to prevent and combat gender-based violence, including domestic violence, actions have been carried out focused on sensitizing the general public on the phenomenon of domestic violence/violence against women; we mention: annual inclusion of the theme of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in sectoral professional development plans; testing of innovative approaches in the response of police officers in examining cases of domestic violence and violence against women; piloting the work of the intervention team in cases of sexual violence in 3 districts; adjustment of the methodology of risk assessment for victims of domestic violence; integration of aspects of preventing and combating domestic violence in sectoral policy documents. Traditionally, the international campaign "16 days of activism against gender-based violence" (25 November-10 December), organized by the Government in cooperation with local public administration authorities, civil society and development partners, is held in the Republic of Moldova. In 2022 the information campaign "Break the silence! We are with you", dedicated to survivors of gender-based violence, with events held in 5 cities: Chisinau, Edinet, Balti, Comrat and Cahul. Hundreds of people from all over the country, including refugees from Ukraine, were informed about how to prevent and combat gender-based violence. The campaign was supported by UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, in partnership with MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION. For the sixth year, the #DenimDayMoldova campaign is implemented, marked annually in April to raise awareness on sexual abuse. The #DenimDayMoldova 2022 activities were dedicated to all survivors of gender-based violence in Ukraine. The #Bodyright campaign, launched by UNFPA Moldova, trained hundreds of young men and women to safely navigate the Internet, protect themselves from online violence. In the education sector, awareness-raising activities on bullying, GBV, sexual harassment are carried out, taking into account gender, age, residence of participants.

Empower women and girls to promote their economic independence and access to resources and to promote equitable relationships within households, communities, and society.

Permanent thematic working groups and temporary working groups, including the group "Women's Economic Empowerment and Gender Equality", have been formed within the Economic Council under the Prime Minister. To support and facilitate women's involvement in society's economic life, the government has launched the Roadmap, which contains actions to encourage female entrepreneurship.¹⁴⁴ Also, the economic contributions of rural women have been supported.¹⁴⁵

A positive example can be the Socio-Economic Inclusion Model, which provides opportunities for women to benefit from complex empowerment, support, and guidance services to practice income-generating activities (part of the EVA project "Promoting Gender Equality in Cahul and Ungheni Districts", funded by the European Union and implemented by UN Women, in partnership with UNICEF Moldova).

The program "Supporting multi-sectoral efforts to prevent violence against women by providing comprehensive support services to survivors, including through economic empowerment programs" implemented by the Women's Law Centre (WLC) in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection with the support of UN Women and the financial support of Sweden, includes a holistic approach by integrating a complete cycle of support to ensure the economic empowerment of survivors of gender-based violence and their integration into the labour market. More than 300 women and girls, particularly from underrepresented groups, will know their rights and access essential services. Personal development courses, orientation in income-generating activities, one-to-one mentoring sessions, and vouchers of up to 50,000 MDL will be organised to support business ideas. Moreover, the project will contribute to a better implementation of the relevant legislation by improving public policies, coordination mechanisms and the creation of new programs and tools for economic empowerment. Also, representatives of public authorities and service providers in 5 districts will be empowered to provide essential and empowering services.

Likewise, UN Women has supported the first-ever women's centres, offering opportunities for women to co-work, make professional connections, and attend events.¹⁴⁶

At the same time, we reiterate the positive experience of several programs geared towards women's economic empowerment. These programs have facilitated women's financial independence and access to resources, which are essential preconditions for preventing gender-based violence.

Creating safe environments, including schools, workplaces, and public spaces

The "Education 2030" strategy includes, among its priorities - Ensuring a healthy and safe environment - A safe, formative, inclusive educational environment, resistant to social, political, economic, and pandemic challenges, is the determining condition for the formation of human personality.¹⁴⁷ The education system is recognised as a determining factor in the formation of a peaceful and safe society through anti-violence education at all levels, resilience skills training during schooling, and reduction of violence (bullying) in education.

In the context of the mentioned documents and against the background of the increase of bullying cases in all general education schools and most vocational-technical schools, various activities were organised to inform students about bullying, GBV, the system of reporting these cases, and support services. With the support of the development partners (UNFPA, UN Women, OSCE, Sweden, ADA,

¹⁴⁴ improving women's access to finance and opportunities for investment, business development and training.

¹⁴⁵ https://consecn.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FP_-Abilitarea-Economica-Femeilor_12.12.22_FIN.Actualizata.pdf

¹⁴⁶ <https://moldova.unwomen.org/ro/munca-noastra/economic-empowerment>

¹⁴⁷ https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/subiect-02-nu-900-mec-2022_1.pdf

SDC, etc.), training was organised for teachers and managers of the institutions to prevent, report, and refer these cases.

Orange boosts UNFPA efforts to educate students in schools about digital violence.

Information sessions on #ClickFreeFromViolence were held in middle and high schools across the country. Students learned about the forms of digital violence, protective measures, and responsible behaviour online. The information sessions are part of Orange's "We Care" program, through which the company's volunteers visit schools and train students in digital technologies. This program has been adapted from the #Bodyright campaign to address the need for awareness regarding digital violence.

The Bodyright campaign promotes boundaries online and calls for the protection of personal images in the digital environment. It was launched in the Republic of Moldova in 2023 on the eve of the 16 days of activism against violence and has already reached hundreds of thousands of people online. <https://moldova.unfpa.org/ro/bodyright>.

The Orange Safe Spaces set up in the temporary placement centres also provide adolescents and young people with opportunities for learning and personal development, helping to avoid risky behaviour. Refugee girls and boys who use the Orange Safe Space services have free access to computers, educational materials and artistic literature, psycho-emotional support, health and life skills development activities, Romanian language learning, as well as other personal development and leisure activities organised here¹⁴⁸.

Raising public awareness to change attitudes and behaviours

For the 22nd consecutive year, from November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to December 10 (International Human Rights Day), the Republic of Moldova is organising the international campaign "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence." The Government organises the campaign in cooperation with local public administration authorities, civil society, and development partners.

The information campaign "Break the silence! We're with you" was dedicated to victims of gender-based violence, with events taking place in 5 cities: Chisinau, Edinet, Balti, Comrat, and Cahul. Hundreds of people from all over the country, including refugees from Ukraine, were informed about how they can prevent and combat gender-based violence.

For the sixth year, the #DenimDayMoldova campaign, marked annually in April to raise awareness about sexual abuse, is being implemented.

As a positive example, the project "Father-School: step-by-step" ("Maria Maria's House") focused on increasing the motivation of men and fathers to participate in the dialogue on gender equality, to be actively involved in the upbringing and education of children, as well as in the development of their parenting skills. Results: 20 trainers/trainers were trained, 146 men/boys were involved in the discussions, and motivated to learn and change their behaviour; at the same time, according to the statistics of the Facebook page "Dad-school", 580 people showed interest in this project.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ In response to the influx of refugees from Ukraine, UNFPA established 5 Mobile Youth Safe Spaces (MSS) in 2023, serving adolescents, youth and young women from refugee, Roma and vulnerable groups in the host community. In 2024, UNFPA, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research, National Youth Agency, Millennium Development Training Institute will continue to support and ensure the effective functioning of these safe spaces. SSM provides activities to prevent gender-based violence (GBV) by promoting gender equality and equitable social norms, referring cases of GBV to service providers, as well as comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) sessions, activities to promote and support youth participation, leisure, socialisation, information, awareness raising sessions and recreational, outdoor, sports, arts and cultural activities, including by involving young people with fewer opportunities.

¹⁴⁹ <https://antiviolenta.md/proiecte-desfasurare/>

18. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to prevent and respond to gender-based violence facilitated by technology (e.g. online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)?

Legislation and regulatory provisions introduced or strengthened.

Online sexual abuse and exploitation of children is a relatively new and under-researched area in the Republic of Moldova. The trend toward the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the perpetration of child sexual abuse and exploitation has been creating new challenges in the investigation, prosecution, and examination of cases in court. One of the most significant difficulties is the need to ensure that the best interests of the child are respected in a context where crimes are committed in the virtual environment and child sexual abuse material can be viewed, downloaded, and distributed by thousands of abusers simultaneously.

The national legal framework covering the offences of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children has undergone several important changes with the entry into force of Law no. 316/2022. Among the amendments that target the legal framework in the field of sexual offences committed with the use of ICT, the following are listed:

- Redefining the notion of victim consent in crime that violates sexual freedom and inviolability;
- Definition of sexual acts and actions of a sexual nature;
- Amending the provisions of articles 175 and 175¹ of the Criminal Code;
- Amendment of the provisions of art. 177 of the Criminal Code.

Art. 175¹ of the Criminal Code says “*Luring a minor for sexual purposes aims at proposal, persuasion, persuasion, manipulation, threat, promise to offer advantages in any form, including through information technologies or electronic communications*”, art. 177 of the Criminal Code says “*Violation of the inviolability of personal life, aims at the dissemination of information of a sexual nature, including images and recordings with sexual content, including by means of information technologies, for the purpose of revenge, hatred, degradation or injury to the honour and dignity of the person.*” Art. 220¹ of the Criminal Code directly targets the solicitation, inducement, or facilitation of online sexual services. In the context of the latest legislative amendments made in Law no. 316/2022, it is necessary to review the manner of interpretation and application of the rules criminalising offences related to sexual life, sexual abuse and exploitation of children with the use of information and communication technologies.

One of the crime forms of online child abuse and exploitation, which the Lanzarote Convention conceives as one that can be carried out exclusively with the use of technology. Art. 175¹ of the Criminal Code *Luring a minor for sexual purposes* was introduced to adjust to art. 23 of the Lanzarote Convention.

During the reporting period, government authorities and civil society organizations focused on continuing the work in the field, based on the Compendium of legal norms and good practices “Sexual abuse and exploitation of children with the use of information and communication technologies” (coordinated by La Strada), approved as a general instruction by the Order of the Prosecutor General no. 80/15 of October 15th, 2020.

The number of cases of sexual abuse and exploitation of children with the use of online technologies highlights the most prevalent form of these categories of crimes – child pornography¹⁵⁰. As a result, the

¹⁵⁰ Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children. Analysis Of Judicial Practices in the Republic of Moldova, Chisinau 2023: https://lastrada.md/pic/uploaded/New%20Folder/Abuzul_si_exploatarea_online_a_copiilor.pdf.

number of criminal cases related to the online sexual exploitation of minors has increased, according to data provided by the General Prosecutor's Office¹⁵¹.

Strengthening the capacity of government actors to develop policies and legislation, as well as their enforcement and implementation

As a positive example, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, in partnership with the Council of Europe Office in Chisinau, held a seminar, "The digital dimension of violence against women", on November 8, 2022. The event aimed to increase public authorities, civil society organizations, and private sector's understanding of the digital dimension of violence against women – violence facilitated by information technologies.

The seminar was a relevant platform for the presentation of GREVIO's (the Council of Europe's group of experts on violence against women and domestic violence, responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention by its signatories) General Recommendation No. 1, which proposes specific actions aimed at combating violence against women online and through technologies.

It was carried out through coaching sessions, pieces of training, technical support in 8 educational institutions participating in the project "A better future among educational institutions, youth centres, and organisations", implemented at the initiative of UN Women Moldova by the Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) "Viitorul", with the financial support of Sweden. Also, 188 young people (121 girls, 67 boys) are ready to promote the importance of healthy relationships and attitudes, thus supporting the prevention of violence against women. This was realised through 9 meetings and piloting activities in 9 educational institutions and youth centres of the project in Călărăși, Sipoteni, Cimișlia, Ialoveni, Drochia, Orhei, Ungheni, Balti, Chisinau. The ultimate goal of the project was to promote gender equality, prevent violence against women and girls, and eradicate gender-based violence through the use of virtual reality technologies and the virtual reality tool previously developed by UN Women based on scenarios identified with young people and other partners in the field.

19. Over the past five years, what steps has your country taken to provide resources to women's organisations working on GBV prevention and response?

In the Republic of Moldova, most organisations are dependent on donor priorities and funding, which is one obstacle to providing various long-term services based on women's needs.

We note positive examples of procurement of services provided by NGOs in the field of culture and youth-related areas. At the same time, state-funded programs do not purchase services from NGOs working on GBV prevention and response. Only the Trusted Line for Girls and Women, managed by La Strada, is state-funded by the Ministry of Social Protection through a subcontracting procedure.

Thus, NGOs remain, for the most part, dependent on external grant-based funding. There are no examples of local public authorities contracting social services from private providers. More often than not, the arguments given by local public authorities for not funding social services provided by CSOs are either related to the austerity of the regional budget, their lack of knowledge of the legal provisions and practical mechanisms of financing CSOs, or the fact that violence against women is not a priority in the planning and funding of social services.

¹⁵¹ Under art. 208/1 of the Criminal Code, child pornography – 68 persons in 65 criminal cases; for the concurrence of offences (under art. 208/1, art. 171, 174, 175, 175/1, 177, 189 and 206 of the Criminal Code) – 10 persons in 10 criminal cases; under art. 175 of the Criminal Code, sexual acts committed with a person under the age of 16, 19 decisions in respect of 20 persons; under art. 175/1 of the Criminal Code, luring a minor for sexual purposes, 1 criminal case in respect of 1 person. The analysed decisions were issued in the period from January 2018 to February 2023 and are covers offences committed from 2012 to 2022.

20. In the last five years, what action has your country taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination, and/or gender bias in the media, including social media?

In the Republic of Moldova, The Audiovisual Council is the guarantor of the public interest in the media field and has the mission to contribute to the development of audiovisual media services under the principles of communication set out in the Code of Audiovisual Media Services no. 174/2018 (CSMA)¹⁵²

Decision no. 160 of May 26, 2023, approved the *Methodology for Monitoring Hate Speech in Media Content* by the Audiovisual Council. This methodology is based on the Guidelines for Assessing and Processing Cases of Hate Speech – Combating Hate Speech in the Audiovisual Media in the Republic of Moldova, which were developed as part of the project "Strengthening access to justice through non-judicial redress mechanisms for victims of discrimination, hate speech, and bias-motivated crimes in the Eastern Partnership". The methodology for monitoring hate speech in audiovisual media content is based on two international tools: the Rabat Action Plan and the ECtHR triple test, which assess and sanction hate speech¹⁵⁴.

The Audiovisual Council has submitted a new regulation on audiovisual content for public consultation and is expected to approve it in 2024. This regulation will also prohibit elements of gender-based discrimination and stereotyping, sexism, and sexist advertising in audiovisual program services.

Press releases were published on the official pages, as well as on the social networks of the subdivisions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Also, short videos were made on the promotion of gender equality, participation in conferences, training courses, workshops, round tables, and TV and radio programs so as to promote and strengthen gender equality at national and institutional level.

Adopt, strengthen and enforce legal reforms to combat discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media

As regards the criminalisation of hate speech based on gender, new rules were introduced in the Criminal Code by revising Art. 346, making it mandatory to punish incitement to hatred or violence, manifested by public appeal, dissemination of information, or other forms of informing the public, including through the mass media, in written form, in drawings or images, or through a computer system, against a category of persons on the grounds of prejudice, including gender. At the same time, the syntagm "social, national, racial or religious hatred" in the Criminal Code has been replaced by the word "prejudice", and in art. 134/21, the notion of "prejudiced motive" has been defined as a preconceived idea of the perpetrator based on considerations of race, colour, ethnic, national or social origin, citizenship,

¹⁵² The AVMSC, which entered into force on January 1, 2019, transposes Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of March 10, 2010, on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive), published in the Official Journal of the European Union L 95 of April 15, 2010, and contains gender aspects.

¹⁵³ Thus, art. 1 defines hate speech – a message that propagates, incites, promotes or justifies racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance or discrimination based on sex, race, nationality, religion, disability or sexual orientation. Art. 18, gender equality stipulates: (1) Media service providers shall promote in their activity the principle of equality between women and men. (2) When broadcasting audiovisual programs, media service providers shall respect the principle of equality between women and men. (3) The use of sexist language and scenes of violence and degrading behaviour towards women and men in audiovisual media services shall be prohibited.

Art. 11, Respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, audiovisual programs are prohibited: (a) likely to propagate, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance or discrimination based on sex, race, nationality, religion, disability or sexual orientation; (b) disseminating child pornography; 1 (3) Media service providers shall be obliged to comply with the legislation on the protection of honour, dignity and professional reputation, as well as the right to respect for and protection of intimate, family and private life. Art. 35. The duties of public media service providers shall be incumbent on audiovisual media service providers: a) to provide audiovisual programmes, including news, on the realities of the country and the world, aimed at ensuring accurate, impartial, objective information of the public, respecting political balance, gender equality, freedom of expression, creativity and conscience; i) to employ qualified personnel, taking into account the diversity of society and gender equality; to organise professional development of personnel, at least once every 5 years, within their own continuous training centre or by contracting appropriate services.

In Art. 13. To ensure accurate information, audiovisual media service providers must take into account that in audiovisual news and debate programs, information on issues of public interest, political, economic, social or cultural, must avoid any form of discrimination (para. 6 lit. b)). In its turn, the Audiovisual Council exercised its regulatory function in the field of competence, approving the secondary regulatory basis (art. 75 of the CSMA).

¹⁵⁴ This methodology is a working tool for the protection of human rights, focusing on issues related to the right to freedom of expression and its derogations, such as the prohibition of discrimination, sexism, racial hatred, etc.

sex, gender, language, religion or religious beliefs, political opinions, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, health status, age, marital status, In addition, the Contravention Code has been supplemented with art. 70/1, which penalises intentional actions, public appeals, dissemination of information, or other forms of informing the public aimed at instigating discrimination on the grounds of prejudice.

Provide training for media professionals to encourage the creation and use of stereotypical, balanced, and diverse images of women and girls in the media, including on social networks

According to the Electoral Code, the Central Electoral Commission is responsible for monitoring gender equality in elections. The Commission prepares and publishes a comprehensive analysis of men's and women's participation at all stages of the electoral process through the ITC systems after each electoral event.

Through the consolidated efforts of the Council of Europe, the Central Electoral Commission, and the Audiovisual Council, an awareness-raising campaign on combating sexism in elections is being carried out in the Republic of Moldova¹⁵⁵. The campaign's roadmap involves implementing activities aimed at informing and training key actors who could be involved in fighting sexism in elections¹⁵⁶.

In May and June 2023, a methodology for monitoring sexism during election campaigns was developed and integrated into these initiatives. The Audiovisual Council also approved the methodology.

In addition, the new Code of Conduct introduces a provision on combating sexist and hate speech/behaviour among electoral candidates¹⁵⁷, approved for the general local elections in the fall of 2023.

Enhancing cooperation to combat discrimination, hate speech, sexism, and other forms of gender-based violence and ensuring equality in the context of this autumn's presidential elections were the topics discussed at several events organised by the Council of Europe and the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova, in partnership with the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova, the Audiovisual Council and UN Women Moldova¹⁵⁸.

A positive example is the Gender Centre/Platform for Gender Equality initiative, which will organise several training programs for journalists and competitions for media products on the topics of Women, Peace, and Security¹⁵⁹.

Multiple training activities on GBV, gender equality, sexism, and discrimination have been carried out to build the capacity of media representatives. The Guidelines for the Assessment and Handling of Hate Speech in the Media and the Revised Code of Conduct for Electoral Contestants and Media Institutions were developed.

As a positive practice, we mention the awareness-raising activities on combating sexism, harassment, and violence against women in elections within the project "Support for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the Republic of Moldova", implemented by the Council of Europe and the Central Electoral Commission¹⁶⁰.

The valuable experience of the Independent Journalism Centre, the Independent Press Association, and other organisations in training journalists on gender equality issues must be capitalised on and expanded. Additionally, sustained investment in initial and ongoing journalist training is needed.

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.coe.int/ro/web/chisinau/-/combating-sexism-in-elections-awareness-raising-video-released>

¹⁵⁶ On 29 September 2023, around 60 representatives of election management bodies, local authorities, non-governmental organisations, anti-discrimination stakeholders, media and potential voters gathered at a roundtable to build a common platform for discussion on the importance of preventing and combating hate speech, sexism and other forms of gender-based violence ahead of the electoral campaign for the general local elections on 5 November 2023.

¹⁵⁷ The revised code was signed by media representatives and registered electoral candidates in all 34 second-level constituencies.

¹⁵⁸ <https://consiliuaudiovizual.md/news/combaterea-discriminarii-si-a-discursului-instigator-la-ura-in-alegerile-locale-discutate-de-reprezentantii-ca/>

¹⁵⁹ <https://egalitadedegen.md/>

¹⁶⁰ https://a.cec.md/ro/combaterea-sexismului-hartuirii-si-violentei-impotriva-femeilor-in-alegeri-2781_102846.html

21. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalised groups of women and girls?

Over the past five years, several specific actions have been taken to address violence against marginalised groups of women and girls. One of these actions is reflected in art. 42/2 of Law no. 200/2010 on the Regime of Foreigners in the Republic of Moldova, which provides for the possibility of extending the right of temporary residence for foreigners who are or have been victims of domestic violence. This legal provision offers a framework of protection and support for foreigners who are in vulnerable situations and in need of assistance in the Republic of Moldova.

Under this article, the right of temporary residence may be extended for foreigners who have been victims of domestic violence under certain conditions: (a) the alien does not pose a threat to national security and/or public order; (b) the alien confirms his/her status as a victim of domestic violence; (c) the stay in the country is necessary for the proper conduct of the proceedings before the court or other competent authority; (d) there are well-founded fears that the alien's life or physical integrity is endangered or that he/she will be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in case of return to the country of origin.

This legal provision ensures that victims of domestic violence, including foreign women and girls, receive protection and support in the Republic of Moldova and have the right to apply for an extension of their temporary residence permit to escape dangerous situations or abuse. Also, the right of temporary residence for victims of domestic violence and the related residence permit are issued free of charge, thus ensuring equal access to rights and services for these vulnerable groups. According to Art. 31, para 2, letter e, 1, Law no. 200/2010 on the Regime of Foreigners in the Republic of Moldova, the right of temporary residence may also be granted for the protection of victims of trafficking in human beings and the victims of domestic violence. At the same time, foreigners who are or who have been victims of trafficking in human beings during the reflection period may be granted tolerance on the territory of the Republic of Moldova (art. 68, para. 1, letter e, Law no. 200/2010 on the Regime of Foreigners in the Republic of Moldova). Also, to decrease the rate of violence, tertiary prevention measures were carried out, as well as measures for keeping track of the aggressors and providing protection and assistance to victims, inclusively by drawing up personalised safety plans within the police. Awareness raising and public information activities on gender-based violence at both national and local levels, training activities for the Ministry of Internal Affairs' personnel.

A positive example is the Council of Europe project "Support in the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the Republic of Moldova", in the framework of which were analysed issues related to the implementation of articles 60 and 61 (Gender-based asylum claims and nonrefoulement) and art. 59 (Residence status) of the Istanbul Convention, issues related to the protection of migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking women.

Increased attention was given in this regard to programs targeting the rights and opportunities of vulnerable groups such as women with disabilities, women living with HIV/AIDS, girls, adolescent and younger women, older women, refugees, and internally displaced women.

As a positive practice, we can mention the following: the cash program as part of case management for survivors of gender-based violence and people at high risk of gender-based violence, refugees, and host communities to increase their access to specialised services to respond to gender-based violence, access to safe spaces, relocation, health services and legal assistance. Over 300 survivors have been supported through this program.

Participation, accountability, and gender-sensitive institutions

Critical areas of concern:

- G. Women in power and decision-making
- H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- L. The girl child

22. In the last five years, what actions and measures has your country taken to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?

Introducing temporary special measures, such as quotas, reserved seats, benchmarks, and targets that promote women's participation in politics, especially at the decision-making level.

Several measures have been taken to ensure women's participation in public life and decision-making:

Art. 68 (3) of the Electoral Code no. 325/2022 stipulates that (3) the lists of candidates for parliamentary and local elections shall be drawn up in compliance with the minimum representation quota of 40% for both sexes. The ranking of candidates on the lists shall be according to the formula: a minimum of 4 candidates for every ten positions. If the lists of candidates hadn't met this requirement, there would have been a risk that, albeit on the list, the contestant wouldn't, in fact, be considered for the electoral race.

Law no. 294/2007 on political parties establishes that political parties are entitled to receive annual funding from the state budget through the Central Electoral Commission, which is distributed as follows – 7.5% for political parties in proportion to the number of women elected in parliamentary elections and 7.5% for political parties in proportion to the number of women elected in local council elections. In addition, the law regulates the obligation of political parties to spend 20% of the amount of annual allocations from the state budget to promote and encourage women's participation in political and electoral processes.

As regards women's participation in the decision-making process, in particular participation in elections, we mention the amendment of the national legislation by introducing a mandatory quota for the registration of candidate lists for parliamentary elections and elections of local councillors - candidate lists for parliamentary and local elections will be drawn up in accordance with the minimum representation quota of 40% for both sexes. The ranking of candidates on the lists will be according to the formula: a minimum of 4 candidates for every 10 positions. As a result, the number of women in decision-making positions increased in the Parliament from 24.8% (2020)¹⁶¹ to 40% (2024)¹⁶². In local government, women mayors increased from 22% (2019) to 24.02% (2023)¹⁶³.

At the same time, political parties will be able to benefit from financial resources from the state budget in proportion to the number of women and young people elected as a result of the elections. Such legislative measures are designed to encourage political parties to promote and support candidates from these categories to improve political representation. At the same time, even considering the progress, the maintenance of gender stereotypes affects women's political career paths.

On the other hand, many women are working as secretaries of state, rectors and prorectors of universities, vice-presidents of the Academy of Sciences, directors of research institutes, directors of innovation centres and technology parks, etc.

¹⁶¹ <https://genderpulse.md/ro/participare-la-luarea-deciziilor/reprezentarea-femeilor-si-barbatilor-in-organele-de-luare-a-deciziilor/reprezentarea-femeilor-si-barbatilor-deputati-in-parlament>

¹⁶² <https://www.parlament.md/StructuraParlamentului/Frac%C5%A3iuniparlamentare/tabid/83/language/ro-RO/Default.aspx>

¹⁶³ https://a.cec.md/ro/numarul-femeilor-alese-in-functia-de-primar-consilier-local-2781_95999.html
<https://www.calm.md/fiecare-al-patrulea-primar-din-r-moldova-este-femeie-calm-ramane-punctul-dvs-de-spriijin/>

Likewise, we mention the implementation of various capacity-building and skills-development programs such as mentoring, leadership, public speaking, personal development, awareness campaigns on political empowerment for women candidates, and the collection and analysis of data on women's participation in politics, including in appointed and elected positions.

We reiterate the importance of taking measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute, and punish violence against women (including hate speech and sexist speech) in politics and public life (both online and offline).

23. In the last five years, what has your country done to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through ICTs?

During the reporting period, the following actions were carried out in this area:

- 1) Introduce regulations to promote equal pay, retention, and career advancement of women in media and ICT;
- 2) Work with media and ICT employers to improve internal policies and voluntary employment practices;
- 3) Provide support to women's media networks and organisations;
- 4) Likewise, sustained programs have been implemented focused on improving women's capacity to participate and make decisions for active involvement in the political life of the country. As a result, the rate of women elected to decision-making positions has increased: in the Parliament from 24.8% in 2020 to 40% in 2024; in the local government women mayors increased from 22% in 2019 to 24.02% in 2023.

24. Describe the current national machinery on women's issues in your country (a governmental entity dedicated exclusively to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment) and describe the steps your country has taken in the last five years to establish and/or strengthen it.

Under art. 19, para. 1) and 2) of Law no.5/2006, the central public authority authorised to develop, monitor, evaluate, and promote policies in the field of equality between women and men is the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, financed according to the annual Law on the State Budget. Within the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, there is a specialised subdivision, the Gender Equality Policy Department, which is an integral part of the national mechanism for the promotion of gender equality in the Republic of Moldova. This subdivision has been strengthened by increasing the number of staff and establishing an additional management position.

At the same time, there are weak connections between the nominated institutions, and additional efforts are needed to coordinate actions and train specialists so as to create a robust and functional mechanism. We reiterate that, in the view of civil society, the institutional mechanism is to be structured in accordance with Law no. 5/2006 on ensuring equal opportunities between women and men, which provides for the functioning of the Government Commission for Equality between Women and Men. Thus, other ministries and institutions on gender equality and women's empowerment will be made responsible; space will be created for the synergy of implementation of CEDAW, BPfA, and Agenda 2030.

In regard to budgeting the work of the mentioned institutional mechanism, we note the following:

- The maintenance expenses of the Department of Gender Equality Policies of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection for 2020-2023 amounted to – 1,037,600 MDL in 2020; 1,005,600 MDL in 2021; 1,406,400 MDL in 2022; and 1,510,200 MDL in 2023.

- The maintenance expenses of the Council for Equality in 2020-2023 amounted to: 4,597,500 MDL in 2020; 4,730,500 MDL in 2021; 5,872,400 MDL in 2022; and 6,356,400 MDL in 2023.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, through the Gender Equality Policy Department, is responsible for the implementation of two programs:

- Program for Promoting and Ensuring Equality between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for 2023-2027 (Government Decision no. 203/2023)¹⁶⁴. This program intervenes through five general objectives and has 46 specific actions to close gender inequalities in various areas of social and economic life. The program aims to increase the number of initiatives implemented at the local level on gender equality, expanding long-term care services for family members, improving national legislation on equal treatment, reducing the gender pay gap, and ensuring women's representation in leadership positions and decision-making. A separate objective is dedicated to the involvement of men in activities to promote gender equality, which includes measures to encourage male participation in pedagogical specialities so that their promotion and graduation rates increase by at least 5% annually.
- The National Program on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for 2023-2027 (Government Decision no. 332/2023)¹⁶⁵. The program intervenes through four general objectives translated into 90 specific actions. The implementation of the Program aims to reduce the prevalence of all forms of violence against women and domestic violence by 2027, accompanied by an increase in the number of cases reported to the police, criminal cases brought, and convictions applied for acts of violence. Emphasis is placed on early intervention and prevention of violence so that fewer women end up in crisis situations and each victim and their children receive the support they need at the right time to make a long-term difference in their lives. The budget for the implementation of the program is 19.8 million MDL, of which 4.0 million MDL are from the state budget and 15.8 million MDL – from development partners' sources.

25. In the last five years, what other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality in sectors? (e.g. gender focal points in the executive, legislature, or justice; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; gender audits, consultations with women's organisations)

Per Law no. 5/2006, Gender Coordination Groups (formed by gender units) are established in 14 central public administration authorities (ministries). These aim to ensure a comprehensive approach to gender equality in policies and programs in all areas and at all levels of decision-making and implementation. The total number of members of the Gender Coordinating Groups within the public central authorities is 166. Over the last few years, some ministries, in partnership with NGOs, have carried out capacity-building activities for specialists. At the same time, continued efforts are needed in this segment. Despite the legal provisions, there are still difficulties in the functioning of gender units in local public administration.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is the institution responsible for coordinating the work of the Gender Focal Groups and ensuring the functionality of the specialised committees on the implementation of CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention.

In order to coordinate the National Program on Women, Peace, and Security for 2023-2027, a network of national focal points was created to promote and realise the objectives of the Agenda. Under the EVA Project "Promoting Gender Equality in Cahul and Ungheni Districts", implemented in partnership by UN

¹⁶⁴ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=137409&lang=ro

¹⁶⁵ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=138005&lang=ro

Women Moldova with UNICEF and funded by the European Union (2020-2023), 24 communities in Cahul and Ungheni districts have become real champions in promoting gender equality. The project has significantly contributed to the promotion of gender equality in the Republic of Moldova, its main objective being to mainstream gender in local policies and budgets and to combat gender-based violence, including domestic violence and violence against children, in the two districts of Cahul and Ungheni¹⁶⁶.

As a positive example, we emphasise the project "Partnerships for Women's Leadership and Good Governance" (Friedrich Ebert Foundation, AO "Institutum Virtutes Civilis", with the financial support of the European Union), within which the audit reports on local policies in the field of gender equality were prepared for the Ialoveni, Rezina, Telenesti, and Straseni. The documents contain the findings and recommendations on gender mainstreaming in public policies and institutional procedures of local public authorities (LPAs)¹⁶⁷.

The Platform for Gender Equality, a national network of individuals and legal entities acting as an active and unified voice for gender equality in the Republic of Moldova makes a significant contribution to promoting gender equality policies¹⁶⁸.

In the elaboration of public policy documents (strategies and programs) and planning documents (action plans, national development plans) the following are applied – the Methodological Guide on integrating the provisions of the National Development Strategy into planning documents, public policy documents, and normative acts at the national level and the Guide for integrating the gender equality perspective in the process of elaboration of public policies. The Guidelines set out the requirements for mainstreaming the LNOB principle (leave no one behind), gender mainstreaming, and the principle of non-discrimination in public policies. Thus, in line with the area of intervention and as far as data are available, the documents incorporate women's rights as a force to promote policy sustainability.

The development partners play an important role in ensuring and promoting gender equality. They, jointly with the Government, carry out various international projects in the field. In this context, we want to express gratitude to ILO, IOM, UNHCR, UN Women, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNDP, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, OSCE Mission to Moldova, ADA, SDC, and others.

26. If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what steps has it taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality?

To facilitate ensuring equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex as well as to monitor the situation in this field, the National Council for Human Rights - an advisory body to the Government - is established and functioning. Through the platform of specialised Commissions (including the CEDAW Commission) coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (Government Provision No. 150/2023), the Council monitors the implementation of the State's human rights policy and international human rights treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party. Members of the Commissions are representatives of central public administration authorities and public institutions, civil society, and development partners.

¹⁶⁶ As a result of a participatory approach, more than 67,100 women/girls and 59,000 men/boys benefit from local development strategies that are designed for the first time to respond to the needs of all citizens. 41 community-led projects, designed through participatory and inclusive processes, have helped more than 12,000 local people to benefit from improved services such as renovated kindergartens, safer pedestrian crossings, lighting, and new recreational and learning spaces. All these activities have ultimately contributed to community cohesion. <https://moldova.unwomen.org/ro/stories/comunicat-de-presa/2023/06/proiectul-eva-mai-multe-comunitati-sensibile-la-dimensiunea-de-gen-mai-multe-fete-si-femei-protejate-de-violenta>

¹⁶⁷ <https://eu4moldova.eu/ro/strong-in-patru-raioane-ale-tarii-au-fost-prezentate-rapoartele-de-audit-al-politicilor-locale-in-domeniul-egalitatii-din-gen-strong/>

¹⁶⁸ The Platform currently has 52 members (of which 32 are legal entities) and is still open to new members. The Platform is run by a Permanent Bureau assisted by a Secretariat, which together facilitates the promotion of gender equality in the Republic of Moldova, both at national and local level. <https://egalitadedegen.md/>

The institution that ensures respect for human rights and freedoms by public authorities, organisations, and enterprises, regardless of the type of ownership and legal form of organisation, and by persons in positions of responsibility at all levels is the Ombudsman. The People's Advocate shall contribute to the protection of human rights and freedoms by preventing their violation, monitoring, and reporting on the observance of fundamental human rights and liberties at the national level, improving the legislation in the field of human rights and freedoms, international cooperation in this field, promoting human rights and freedoms and the mechanisms for their protection, and applying the procedures regulated by this Law.

The mission of the Equality Council is to prevent and protect against discrimination, ensure equality, promote equal opportunities and diversity. In 2020-2023, the Equality Council registered complaints of discrimination against women in the following areas: in the political and public life of the country – 7, of which were declared inadmissible – 3, in 4 cases – no discrimination was found; in the field of education – 10, of which: declared inadmissible – 4, discrimination was found in 2 cases, in 3 cases no discrimination was found; 1 complaint was settled amicably; in the field of employment – 140, of which: declared inadmissible – 63, decisions of finding – 25, in 36 cases no discrimination was found, 8 complaints were withdrawn, 5 complaints are under examination, 3 advisory opinions; in the field of health – in the 4 registered complaints discrimination was found. In 2020-2022, out of the total number of individuals who addressed the Council, reporting a situation of discrimination, 434 were men and 343 were women. The decisions issued by the Council can be accessed on the Authority's official website, www.egalitate.md, under Decisions/Recommendations.

Peaceful and inclusive societies

Critical areas of concern:

- E. Women and armed conflict
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

27. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, and implement the women, peace, and security agenda?

Based on the institutional policies established by the provisions of the National Programs related to gender equality, and, in particular, through the objectives of the Program on Women, Peace, and Security, the Republic of Moldova promotes the involvement and encouragement of women to participate in decision-making at all levels. It has set dedicated objectives on increasing the level of participation and representation of women in the security and defence sector, which implies ensuring increased participation of women in decision-making at both national and regional levels and in international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts, in peacekeeping operations, in particular, among military observers, military, civilians and representatives of security and defence sector structures.

During the reporting period, efforts to implement the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda were structured in two phases. The first stage aims at the realisation of the first National Program for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security for 2018-2021 and its Action Plan.

During 2021-2022, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the National Administration of Penitentiaries of the Republic of Moldova, with the support of UN Women, developed

and operationalised internal mechanisms to prevent and combat cases of sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace. Women's associations in the defence and security sector (UN Women support) have also been created, strengthening their capacities and advocacy efforts to advance gender equality in these sectors.

In 2022, an assessment was made on the implementation of the mentioned documents. The assessment of the level of implementation of the National Program for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security for 2018-2021 and its Action Plan reveals that there are still remaining constraints that require sustained concern and intervention. In the list of these constraints the following can be highlighted: sporadic inter-institutional communication at the level of joint working groups; political instability; mechanisms for investigating cases of harassment have not been adopted or have not been designed on the basis of institutional trust; uneven performance on training or knowledge transfer; reduced possibilities for reconciliation of work and private life, especially during the pandemic; disproportionate reasonable accommodation measures; insufficient training of specialists on cases of moral or sexual harassment; stereotypes and barriers to women's career advancement; mechanisms for reporting, monitoring and evaluation of policy documents. The lack of an appropriate attitude would lead to the disempowerment of the security and defence system and would exacerbate the main problems concerning vulnerable groups. Thus, the proportion of realisation of implementation of activities was assessed in 2018 and constituted 80%, and in 2019 – 64%, followed by the Covid-19 period during 2020-2021.

The positive aspects that have strengthened the experience of the first National Program are the following: the development of a dedicated program in the security and defence sector, the creation of women's associations, the adoption of mechanisms for reporting and examining cases of harassment, capacity building of security and defence employees through training and skills training, reducing stereotypes at the institutional level, and supporting amending the legal and institutional framework¹⁶⁹.

Based on the evaluation results and in broad consultation with civil society, the following program has been developed.

The second stage aims to develop and implement the second National Program for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security for 2023-2027 (Government Decision no.152/2023).

In order to implement the mentioned programs and international commitments in the field, the security and defence structures have focused their efforts on training specialists on gender equality, FPS, prevention of gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, etc. Positive examples are the activities of various projects: support for security sector reform (Ministry of Defense, UNDP¹⁷⁰); strengthening police training capacities (Ministry of Internal Affairs, UNDP, U.S. Embassy¹⁷¹); and EU4Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk (EU/NIRAS).

To strengthen women's participation in conflict resolution, UN Women facilitated consultations with local organisations and gender equality activists on both sides of the Dniester. They set up three women's discussion platforms that include confidence-building elements.

We mention the work of the Association of Women in the Police and the Association of Women in the National Army, which contributes to promoting women in their respective sectors and strengthening their skills.

¹⁶⁹ https://customs.gov.md/api/media/18/08/2023/HG_152-2023_Rezolu%C8%9Bia_ONU_1325_.pdf

¹⁷⁰ <https://www.undp.org/ro/moldova/projects/finalizat-suport-pentru-reforma-sectorului-de-securitate-republica-moldova>

¹⁷¹ <https://www.undp.org/moldova/projects/strengthening-police-training-capacities-republic-moldova>

Positive examples include the international project "Local communities build and sustain peace: strengthening women and youth participation in sustainable peacebuilding in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kenya, Moldova, South Sudan, Uganda, and Ukraine", implemented in Moldova by Gender-Center/Platform for Gender Equality in partnership with The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), with the support of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA).

Also, we mention the work of the NATO CID and the establishment and work of the PISA Platform.

As a result, the number of women in defence and security is increasing, including in decision-making positions.¹⁷²

In the defence sector, the number of female military officers increased from 21.6% in 2020 to 24.2% in 2023, and the number of female civil servants rose from 56.9% in 2020 to 59% in 2023.

As a strategic result, we witness Moldova's transformation from a peace and security consumer to a peace and security provider.

28. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase women's leadership, representation, and participation in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action, and crisis response at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflict, and in fragile or crisis environments?

In order to comply with UN requirements on the number of women in international peacekeeping missions/operations (minimum 9% at contingent level), as well as in order to achieve specific objective no.3 (*Participation of women in the security and defence sector in peacebuilding at regional and international level*) of the Action Plan on the implementation of the National Program for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for 2023-2027, approved by Government Decision no. 152/2023, from 2024 onwards, the contingents of the Republic of Moldova participating in peacekeeping missions in Kosovo (KFOR) and Lebanon (UNIFIL) must include women (4 women in KFOR and 3 in UNIFIL).

Also, as a result of the armed conflict in Ukraine, the Ministry of Internal Affairs was involved in migration management, humanitarian assistance, incident and crisis management in the security zone, women's participation in decision-making, conflict and violence prevention, and management, prevention and combating trafficking in human beings, abuse, and smuggling.

With the support of UN Women, the Women's Advisory Council and other local women's platforms were established in 2023 to strengthen women's leadership in peacebuilding. The Women's Advisory Council is made up of representatives from civil society organisations and expert communities on both sides of the Dniester and will promote gender-sensitive peacebuilding efforts.

29. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to increase judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses against women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?

During 2020-2024, several actions have been ensured, among which we mention:

1. Implement policies to prevent violations of women's and girls' rights.
2. Institutional capacity building by organising training programs for beneficiaries.
3. Undertaking measures to combat illicit trafficking in arms, drugs, and trafficking in human beings.

¹⁷² The Ministry of Internal Affairs currently employs 4233 women (26.44%), and 321 women are employed in managerial positions, which represents 15.11% of the total number of managerial positions in the institution. 1946 women are employed in the Police, which constitutes 23.18% of the total number of personnel.

4. Increase access to violence prevention and protection services for women affected by conflict, refugees, and displaced women.

5. The collection and dissemination of data on the prevalence and incidence of different forms of violence against women, as well as the analysis of the causes and consequences of this phenomenon, is the starting point for the development of effective mechanisms at the policy level to eradicate this phenomenon. Among the areas that will generate disaggregated statistical data is the judiciary, as the guarantee of the right of access to justice is part of numerous instruments within the universal human rights protection system and other relevant regional rights and instruments. In order to fortify this segment, it is necessary to take into account that, as of 2020, judicial statistics are collected electronically through the Case Management Information Program. Thus, the electronic statistical reports generate data on each component of offence, as well as separately by aggravating circumstances. Likewise, data on the category of penalty imposed and data on offenders disaggregated by sex, as well as separate data concerning minors, are reflected.

6. At the same time, given the imminent need to have disaggregated judicial statistical data on victims, the electronic statistical data collection module has also included forms that generate data in relation to the victim of the crime, disaggregated by the following components: total number of victims, age (18-30 years; 31-50 years; 51-60 years; more than 60 years); gender (male, female); education (higher education; specialised medium; medium; incomplete medium); drunk or narcotic state; living environment (rural, urban); total number of victims previously victimised.

7. In addition to criminal and misdemeanour cases concerning domestic violence, in civil matters on the issue of protection orders, the system generates three categories of statistical reports¹⁷³.

The model report on the application of protection measures by category of adults and minors (victims) includes data on the following: the total number of applications submitted, admitted, and rejected; the categories of protection measures that can be imposed; disaggregation by gender, age, and living environment (rural/urban).

We note that adequate measures have been taken but need to be further extended and strengthened:

- Implementing legal and policy reforms to remedy and prevent violations of women's and girls' rights
- Strengthening institutional capacities, including the justice system and transitional justice mechanisms, as appropriate, during conflict and crisis response
- Strengthening the capacity of security sector institutions on human rights and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, and abuse
- Providing increased access to violence prevention and protection services for women affected by conflict, refugees, and displaced women.

Several programs in this regard have been implemented in partnerships between PCA, LPA, and CSO with the support of development partners¹⁷⁴.

Taking action against trafficking in women and children

In the field of preventing and combating violence, the normative framework in the Republic of Moldova has continued to be developed; thus, on June 1, 2022, *Government Decision No. 347 on the approval of the National Program for Child Protection for 2022-2026 and its Action Plan* was approved,

¹⁷³ (1) Report on the progress of the resolution of cases; (2) report on the application of protection measures by category of adults; (3) report on the application of protection measures by category of minors. The Case Progress Report contains disaggregated data on the number of applications registered; number of applications received in the procedure; number of cases disposed of; backlog of cases; number of victims (minors/adults); number of offenders; number of appeals.

¹⁷⁴ <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJoiMjk5OTJkMGEzZTEwY0NmE1LWJiNTAtMTIiNjRiODhNwYzIiwidCI6ImU1YzM3OTgxLTY2NjQ0NDZlNC04YTBlTY1NDkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOj9>

which proposes a different approach to the process of setting priorities for the development of the child protection system – one based on the impact of recordings, strong institutions, informed and active society, as well as through strengthened capacities for effective response. This approach puts children and their best interests at the centre of change. One of the overarching objectives of the planned Program is to **ensure zero tolerance on the part of adults and children towards any form of violence against children**, where violence against children means all types of violence as defined in *art. 2 of Law no. 45/2007 on preventing and combating domestic violence*, including child neglect, child labour exploitation, and **child trafficking**.

The current regulatory framework provides for the actions that need to be taken to ensure the rights of children at risk. Thus, art. 8 of Law no. 140/2013 on special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents provides for the risk situations in which a child may be, which includes the component of **child victims of trafficking**.

In the same vein, we also mention the provisions of *Government Decision no. 270/2014 on the approval of the Instructions on the intersectoral cooperation mechanism for the identification, assessment, referral, assistance and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of violence, neglect, exploitation and trafficking*, which regulated the **obligation** of representatives of educational, health, public order, social welfare, other public authorities and institutions with responsibilities in the field of child protection, namely:

1) to register referrals of suspected cases of child abuse, neglect, exploitation, child trafficking and/or to self-report cases where they have identified alleged cases of child abuse, neglect, exploitation, child trafficking by applying sectoral procedures and

2) to immediately inform by telephone the territorial guardianship authority by phone and within 24 hours to send it the report form of the suspected case of violence, neglect, exploitation, or child trafficking.

This mechanism is designed not only to protect the rights of victims of child trafficking but also to protect the rights of child victims of other crimes, as well as children who are exposed to various risk situations. Thus, in 2022, 8422 referrals/sub-referrals on cases of violence, neglect, exploitation, and trafficking were registered, through which 5 child victims of trafficking were identified.

It is important to note that in the field of prevention of risk situations, which may affect the well-being of the child, the regulatory framework of the Republic of Moldova was supplemented by *Government Decision No. 143/2018 for the approval of the Instructions on the mechanism of intersectoral cooperation for the primary prevention of risks to the well-being of each child*, the objectives of which are:

1) strengthening the intervention of universal services employees to meet the needs of the child;

2) ensuring a holistic approach in observing and removing signs of concern to improve child well-being;

3) reducing the need for protective interventions through primary prevention actions;

4) to enhance the family's potential in the upbringing and development of the child.

In this regard, to implement the provisions of the above-mentioned Instructions, on November 25, 2022, the Joint Order¹⁷⁵ of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Education and Research, and the Ministry of Health was signed, approving specific working tools¹⁷⁶.

We draw your attention to the fact that these instructions are aimed at the intervention and cooperation of employees working in the fields of education, health care, social work, and public order to prevent risks to child welfare.

¹⁷⁵ https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Ordin-comun-MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION_MS_MEC_privind- aprobarea-Fiselor-de-observare-evaluare-si-planificare_96_1006_1158-din-25.11.2022.pdf

¹⁷⁶ Child Well-Being Observation Sheet; Child Well-Being Assessment Sheet; Child Well-Being Primary Prevention Action Planning Sheet.

30. In the last five years, what has your country done to eliminate discrimination and violations of girls' rights, including adolescent girls?

During the reporting period, a wide range of actions were organised. Still, the most important ones were focused on the elaboration, implementation, and promotion of state policies at both national and regional levels to respect women's rights and eliminate all forms of discrimination. Thus, we mention that measures have been undertaken to combat discriminatory social norms and practices and raise awareness of the needs and potential of girls; access of women/girls to quality education, skills development, and training in the educational institutions of the MIA have been strengthened.

Address disadvantages in health outcomes due to malnutrition, early childbirth (e.g. anaemia), and exposure to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases

Local public authorities (LPAs) provide socially vulnerable families with adapted dairy mixtures (ALA) to reduce malnutrition. Thus, during 2023, the LPA administration provided 3409 artificially fed children from vulnerable groups with ALA (4,053 in 2022). The financial allocations for the provision of ALA vary from one LPA to another, depending on the number of artificially fed children under one year of age.

In the context of the observance of reproductive health rights, a number of normative acts on the standardisation of health services were drafted and approved by the Ministry of Health:

1) The standard on safe termination of pregnancy, approved by order of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection no. 766 of August 18th, 2020;

2) Clinical protocol "Clinical management of rape cases", approved by order of the Ministry of Health no. 908 of September 30th, 2021;

3) 19 clinical protocols in reproductive health: Emergency contraception, combined injectable contraceptives, combined oral contraceptives, medroxyprogesterone acetate depot-only injectable contraceptive, cervical domes, copper intrauterine device (tcu-380a), levonorgestrel intrauterine device, implants, combined contraceptive vaginal ring, the progesterone vaginal ring, the lactation amenorrhea method, methods based on recognition of the fertile period, progestin-only pills, the combined contraceptive patch, female condoms, male condoms, spermicides and diaphragms, female sterilisation, male sterilisation - vasectomy.

The Republic of Moldova has developed and implemented policies to prevent and control HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections. The objectives are to deconsolidate the health care system to eliminate mother-to-fetus transmission of HIV (prevention of mother-to-fetus transmission of HIV) and to ensure universal access to HIV and sexually transmitted infection testing for pregnant women. Thus, 228 HIV+ women were registered in 2022, including 76 women diagnosed with HIV+ infection, primarily established during pregnancy. During the reporting period, 195 HIV+ women gave birth to 201 live babies, of whom 198 received prophylactic antiretroviral treatment.

By 2022, the percentage of HIV-positive pregnant women who received antiretroviral treatment during pregnancy and/or during labour and delivery was 95.9%, with a target of not less than 95%, and the percentage of HIV-exposed infants who started antiretroviral prophylaxis was 99%, with a target of not less than 95%. In 2022, in line with WHO recommendations, the NCP on prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV was updated.

Integrated STEM education/bridging the digital gender gap in access to digital tools and skills for girls

When we refer to the digital environment of the Republic of Moldova, it is essential to mention that over the last two decades, Moldova's digital transformation efforts have been guided by several national and sectoral strategies. These include: a) National Strategy for Building the Information Society "Moldova Electronica" (Government Decision no. 255/2005); b) National Strategy for the Development of the Information Society "Digital Moldova 2020" (Government Decision no. 857/2013); c) Strategic Program for the Technological Modernization of the Government (eTransformation) (Government Decision no. 710/2011); d) Strategy for the Development of the IT Industry and the Digital Innovation Ecosystem 2018-2023 (Government Decision no. 904/2018); e) Information Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova 2019-2024; f) National Research and Innovation Program 2020-2023 (Government Decision no. 381/2019); g) Radio Spectrum Management Program 2021-2025 and the minimum exposure values of generic frequency blocks for allocation through competitive selection procedure (Government Decision no. 987/2020). The Government's current work program includes digitalisation among the country's 15 sectoral priorities. The National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030", approved by Law No. 315/2022, aligned with both the Association Agreement with the European Union and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, devotes a particular chapter to the e-transformation of government, society, and the economy.

However, the most important achievement for the development of the country's digital transformation sector was the adoption of the Moldova Digital Transformation Strategy (MDTS) at the end of 2023. The Strategy sets out Moldova's vision for digital development until 2030 and reaffirms the commitment to build a modern, citizen-centred society aligned with the European integration agenda. The Strategy has ambitious objectives that focus on promoting the sustainable development of the country. These objectives include developing a digital society, building a solid and competitive ICT sector, creating an innovative and resilient digital economy, establishing an efficient, intelligent, and transparent digital state, creating an accessible, secure, and inclusive digital environment, as well as strengthening Moldova's image as a digital nation. In this respect, given the strong citizen focus of the strategy, the first General Objective is the development of a digital society that is able to reap the benefits of digital technologies and services. In general terms, internet coverage, quality, accessibility, and penetration indicators for Moldova are suitable for the region and its income class. However, exclusions and gaps still exist. According to the strategy, 34.3% of the unconnected cited high prices as the main reason for not being connected, while a further 48.1% and 20.3%, respectively, do not have computers and/or smartphones. These values vary considerably by respondents' income level and much less by place of residence (urban/rural), gender, age and education. In terms of the gender-based digital divide, the level of the indicator for men is about 10% higher than for women. In this respect, the strategy provides a general approach to digital inclusion and does not explicitly address the digital inclusion of women or girls.

The government and other actors are making significant efforts to ensure an enabling environment for the digital inclusion of women and girls. Still, barriers to career advancement remain as existing programs do not target the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups. Even with widespread internet access and ownership of ICT devices, there are still challenges identified in terms of quality and accessibility for certain vulnerable groups (rural areas, elderly), including women, which limit their ability to access certain services and hinder the comprehensive development of the digital economy. Thus, for the implementation of the Strategy, one of the three sectoral programs for its implementation is the Digital Society Development Program, which is in the process of development. Accordingly, in the process of developing the program, the need to introduce measures at the national level to eliminate inequalities and disparities associated with different dimensions, including gender, will be taken into account.

Environmental conservation, protection, and rehabilitation

Critical areas of concern:

- I. Human rights of women
- K. Women and the environment
- L. The girl child

31. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and land degradation?

In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has started to step up its efforts to address the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation affecting the country. However, there are still many challenges in the implementation and monitoring of climate and environmental policies, especially at the local level. These include insufficient awareness of climate change, lack of specific technical capacities, inadequate financing, institutional management challenges, and weak oversight and coordination, which hinder the effective mainstreaming of CME issues across sectors. This is especially true for the inclusion and participation of children in these policies. Few policies clearly focus on the needs of children and young people.

Women in rural areas are also four times more likely to experience absolute poverty and more vulnerable to climate change. These conditions call for concrete actions to increase their access to activities that would generate additional income and support services (such as subsidies), as well as information and knowledge on resilient and sustainable management of the natural and agricultural resources on which they depend.

In 2020-2024, we mentioned the implementation of the UNDP Moldova project *Sustainable and Resilient Communities to Climate Change through Women's Empowerment*. Budget: 3.160.492 USD, Donor: Sweden. Coverage: Nisporeni, Leova, Călărași, Basarabeasca, UTA Gagauzia, Transnistrian region and security zone. Beneficiaries: NGOs, women-headed households, women entrepreneurs, and LPAs in the districts of Nisporeni, Calarasi, Basarabeasca, Leova, UTA Gagauzia, Transnistrian region, and security zone. Achievements:

1) Baseline survey to determine the level of awareness on climate change risks and environmental issues completed (700 respondents - representatives of LPAs, NGOs, women-owned businesses, other private sector entities, women households, general population, and vulnerable groups) in target districts and regions;

2) The climate and environmental profiles of the districts of Calarasi, Nisporeni, Leova, Basarabeasca, and Dubasari were completed with an environmental and a gender component;

3) The climate profiles of the Transnistrian region and ATU Gagauzia have been realised;

4) 6 action plans on gender mainstreaming and climate change adaptation and environmental protection measures in the local development plans of Nisporeni, Leova, Calarasi, Basarabeasca, UTA Gagauzia, and Dubasari districts were elaborated;

5) 89 representatives of local public administration, including 50 women from Calarasi, Leova, and Dubasari districts, were trained on the practical transposition of environmental and climate legislation at the regional level, the application of gender dimension in regional planning and implementation of climate-resilient solutions and initiatives, etc.;

6) 4 guides have been developed for LPAs on the implementation of climate and environment legislation at the local level, as well as on the link between gender, climate, and environment;

7) 854 women heads of household and women and men entrepreneurs (665 women and 189 men) in the agricultural sector improved their skills and capacities in the field of green business management in 35 training courses organised in all target districts and regions;

8) 6 environmental NGOs benefited from tailored technical assistance as part of an institutional capacity-building program; 77 environmental NGOs (313 beneficiaries, including 281 women) strengthened their capacities in climate resilience, disaster risk management, and sustainable development, with gender mainstreaming to further promote the environmental agenda at a national and regional level¹⁷⁷.

32. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programs to reduce disaster risk and build environmental and climate resilience?

During the reporting period, strategic documents were approved, such as:

1) Low Emission Development Strategy to 2030 and Action Plan for its implementation: actions to reduce emissions based on the recently updated CSN contribution.

2) Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan for its implementation: priority adaptation actions for the most vulnerable sectors, based on the NAPA plan.

Both documents include some references to gender issues.

According to the World Bank, Moldova is the most climatically vulnerable country in Europe. Moldova is highly susceptible to natural hazards such as droughts, late spring frosts, hail, floods, and severe storms, which have affected the agricultural sector and the socio-economic development of the country. A recent report indicates that the 2008 floods in Moldova cost more than 120 million dollars, while droughts between 2007-2012 caused more than 1 billion dollars of damage, affecting 80% of the country's territory. "Climate change is already shaping human mobility and causing millions of people to leave their homes. However, migrants and diaspora communities can also be part of the solution," said Christa Rottensteiner, head of the IOM mission in the UK.

Some basic institutional and legislative structures for Disaster Risk Management (DRM) exist in Moldova, but - as is the case in many countries - the main focus remains on a 'reactive' response to disasters rather than a 'proactive' response to disaster risk reduction. At the same time, the capacity of institutions to prevent and respond to crises at the national and local levels remains weak. Data on climate risks and environmental impacts also need to be better collected and managed.¹⁷⁸

The Republic of Moldova joins IOM's innovative Diaspora 4 Climate Action (D4C) Diaspora for Climate Action project. The D4C project aims to create a model for other countries to promote the unique role the diaspora can play in advancing national climate action.¹⁷⁹ Under the D4C project, the IOM will support the "Diaspora Succeeds at Home" (DAR 1+3) initiative led by the Moldovan government. This initiative links diaspora contributions to local development projects. The IOM D4C project will support local projects that promote biodiversity conservation, clean energy, a circular economy, climate-smart agriculture, disaster risk reduction, and ecological renovation.

We particularly appreciate UNICEF's Climate Change and Risk Analysis for Children in Moldova (2023), which contains sex-disaggregated data and information on the impact of climate change on girls, boys, women, and men.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ <https://www.undp.org/ro/moldova/projects/comunitati-durabile-si-reziliente-la-schimbari-climatice-prin-abilitarea-femeilor>

¹⁷⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/11816/file/ANALIZA%20SCHIMB%C4%82RILOR%20CLIMATICE%20%C8%98I%20A%20RISCURILOR%20PENTRU%20COPII%20DIN%20MOLDOVA.pdf>

¹⁷⁹ <https://moldova.iom.int/ro/news/república-moldova-se-alatura-proiectului-inovator-al-diasporei-pentru-actiune-climatice-al-oim>

¹⁸⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/11816/file/ANALIZA%20SCHIMB%C4%82RILOR%20CLIMATICE%20%C8%98I%20A%20RISCURILOR%20PENTRU%20COPII%20DIN%20MOLDOVA.pdf>

CHAPTER IV – NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

33. Describe your country's national strategy or action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, prioritisation, funding, and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets in SDG 5.

The Program for Promoting and Ensuring Equality between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for 2023-2027¹⁸¹ (Government Decision 203/2023) is based on the promotion of the principle of equal opportunities between women and men, and girls and boys. The Moldovan society is going through a process of social and economic transformations, which involves structural gender inequalities, shortcomings in ensuring social protection for people engaged in care activities, wage discrepancies, under-representation of women in decision-making, and a low interest of men in getting involved in activities for the empowerment and promotion of women. The program aims to reduce gender inequalities in various areas of social and economic life and includes five general objectives:

General Objective 1. Reduce structural gender inequalities through gender-sensitive policies and budgets.

General Objective 2. Increase social protection for more people who are involved in long-term care activities for family members.

General Objective 3. Reduce the gender pay gap for equal work or work of equal value.

General Objective 4. Increase the number of men promoting gender equality.

General Objective 5. Promote women, including women from underrepresented groups, in leadership and decision-making positions at central and local levels.

Specific interventions in this program will include actions that:

1) will expand support services for caregivers in order to provide better social protection for caregivers;

2) pass regulations and help employers reduce the gender pay gap for equal pay for equal work or work of equal value;

3) will help reduce stereotypes of men's involvement in occupations where women work predominantly;

4) will reduce disparities in decision-making at national and local levels, including among under-represented groups of women or women's groups/organisations;

5) will ensure wider participation of relevant authorities and institutions in the development, adoption, and implementation of sectoral policies, instruments, and measures aimed at correcting structural gender inequalities;

6) will improve existing legal and institutional framework, including through the establishment of performance indicators in gender-responsive budget programs;

7) promote gender equality in the humanitarian assistance sector (humanitarian crises);

8) provide equitable access to quality public and private sector services.

As a result of the implementation of the objectives of the program, we expect to achieve the following outcomes: an increase in the number of initiatives implemented at the local level on the gender equality dimension; uniform and effective implementation of the decisions approved by the Governmental Commission for Gender Equality; an increase in the number of local public administrations applying the minimum commitments of the European Charter for Equality between Women and Men in Local Life, a rise to 70% in the satisfaction rate of people that benefited from support services, in particular the

¹⁸¹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=137409&lang=ro

"Respiro" service; gradually increasing to 20% the number of male promoters of gender equality and by 15% the number of women from underrepresented groups in elective office (national and local levels), including increasing the proportion of women in the government and positions of ambassadors.

This Program is a tool for increasing gender equality in health, education, the labour market, entrepreneurship, social protection, and local development. Throughout its implementation process, beneficiaries and executors are to provide horizontal and vertical intersectoral partnership and cooperation for gender mainstreaming.

The program is aligned with the objectives of the Moldova 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the impact indicators are also aligned with the targets of SDG5.

34. Please describe the system in your country for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.

In 2020-2021, the Government of Moldova's Gender Responsive Public Financial Management (GRPFM) assessment of PEFA was conducted using the Supplementary Gender Responsive Public Financial Management Assessment Framework. This revealed that Moldova did not have a comprehensive Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) framework in place. To address this, in 2021, for the first time, the government's medium-term budget planning included requirements to integrate gender equality objectives and indicators into budget programs.

The Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Assessment (CPRF 2021) included new elements of a gender perspective of management both at the local level (Cahul and Ungheni districts) and national levels. The CPRF 2021 assessment provides information in terms of recognising the different needs of men and women and subgroups of these categories (e.g., youth, elderly, persons with disabilities, etc.) and promoting gender equality based on an internationally recognised methodology. Medium-term priorities include integrating gender considerations into medium-term budget planning and developing a procedural framework for applying modern internal auditing techniques, including gender mainstreaming. These provisions create the policy and methodological framework in support of a more gender-balanced economy.

Public Finance Management Development Strategy for 2023-2030 (Government Decision no. 71/2023)¹⁸² includes gender equality in the public finance system. Thus, it is recognised that the tax system and expenditures have a different impact on women and men, depending on sex, gender, age, disability, health conditions, ethnicity, and other factors that influence access to and benefits from financed resources and policies.

Moreover, in line with the Public Finance Management Development Strategy for 2023-2030, in the coming period, the Government, with the support of development partners, intends to institutionalise GRB (developing the methodology for implementing GRB for budget users) and strengthen the capacities of the Ministry of Finance and central budget users/state institutions on gender mainstreaming in public finance management.

¹⁸² https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135819&lang=ro

35. What formal mechanisms exist for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

In accordance with the legislative framework, all public documents are subject to public consultations with the participation of stakeholders. The institutions responsible for the field coordinate monitoring and evaluation reports for the implementation of national and international strategic documents.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection coordinates the drafting of the country report on the implementation of the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Beijing+30. In June, public consultations were organised with the members of the Commission on the Implementation of CEDAW, with the participation of representatives of state structures, civil society, and development partners.

In 2020, the government's State Chancellery also organised the Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Likewise, the Progress Report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Republic of Moldova¹⁸³, drafted in 2023, was submitted to public consultations with government authorities, civil society, and development partners.

36. Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of this national report.

The report was based on the analysis of sectoral reports of public institutions, information from development partners, and recommendations received during public consultations with various stakeholders, including civil society. Together, we have identified achievements, gaps, challenges, trends, and areas for future action.

37. Please describe your country's plan of action and timetable for implementing the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if you are a State Party) or the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other UN human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.

In the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which took place in 2022, the Republic of Moldova accepted 186 out of 209 recommendations received. Most of the accepted recommendations concern minority rights, equality and non-discrimination (44 recommendations), conditions of detention together with inhuman and degrading treatment (19 recommendations), gender equality and domestic violence (27 recommendations), independence of the judiciary (11 recommendations), integrity and independence of the Ombudsman and national human rights institutions (9 recommendations), etc. To ensure the implementation of the recommendations, the State Chancellery, jointly with the public authorities, drafted a set of measures for the implementation of the recommendations received at the 40th session of the UN UPR Working Group. The draft was approved at the meeting of the National Human Rights Council on September 4, 2023. The set of measures contains actions for each recommendation or group of similar recommendations, deadlines for the implementation of actions and the responsible authorities for the implementation. According to the preliminary calendar of the UPR session, in order to ensure the internal procedures for the preparation and approval of the National Report, the fourth cycle of assessment for the Republic of Moldova will take place in October 2026, and the deadlines for the implementation of the recommendations have been set until the end of 2025.

¹⁸³ https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/raport_de_progres_odd_2023_vf_15_09_2023_final.pdf

The Republic of Moldova presented its sixth CEDAW Implementation Report in February 2020 at the 75th session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In parallel, a delegation of NGOs presented alternative reports and comments during the session. The Concluding Observations on the sixth periodic report of the Republic of Moldova of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women were submitted for implementation to the Government. Per the procedure, the Government prepared and submitted the report to the Committee at the two-year post-session stage with the urgent interventions.

In 2023, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, in partnership with other ministries and institutions, drafted the seventh CEDAW Implementation Report, which was consulted with civil society organisations and made publicly available¹⁸⁴.

¹⁸⁴ <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Proiectul-Raportului-nr.-7-CEDAW.pdf>

CHAPTER V – DATA AND STATISTICS

38. What are the most important areas in which your country has made the most progress in the last five years on gender statistics at the national level?

Over the past five years, the National Bureau of Statistics has improved the collection, production, and dissemination of gender statistics on its official website – www.statistica.gov.md. The National Bureau of Statistics developed and disseminated a range of new information in areas such as access to the labour market, justice, health, education, household living standards, and social protection, which include available indicators, including disaggregated data by sex. The National Bureau of Statistics collects this data through statistical surveys and administrative data sources.¹⁸⁵ Also, round tables, training programs, and workshops were organised for different user groups to discuss the results of the analytical reports and research. In 2021, in order to improve data availability, including by gender, new indicators were developed and disseminated in the Statbank database:

- 1) In the area of living standards – poverty and inequality by sex (2014-2022);
- 2) In the area of healthcare – HIV incidence rate by sex and age group, 2017-2022 and number of physicians by sex, 2014-2022;
- 3) In the area of justice and crime – population data in pre-trial detention by sex and age group, 2020-2022; victims of homicide by sex and perpetrator, 2013-2022; victims of domestic violence by sex and age group, 2015-2022;
- 4) In the area of labour force and earnings – data on victims of accidents at work by sex and economic activity, 2016-2022.

The data furnished by the National Bureau of Statistics are disseminated and updated annually on the dedicated gender statistics platform <https://genderpulse.md/>, which is an easy-to-understand, interactive graphical visualisation tool for gender-sensitive statistical indicators. The data on GenderPulse are grouped into five thematic areas, according to the UN Minimum Set of Gender Indicators: demography, participation in decision-making, education, health, and economic empowerment.

During this period, the National Bureau of Statistics has worked on drafting and approval of four sectoral and national policy documents, which are intended to regulate and support the national statistical system:

- Law no. 231/2022 on the population and housing census;
- Strategy for the Development of the National Statistical System for 2023-2030, approved by Government Decision no. 954/2022;
- National Statistical System Development Program for 2023-2026 (NSSDP) and its Action Plan, approved through Government Decision no. 503/2023);
- Government Decision no. 953/2022 on the approval of the National Framework for Monitoring the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda.

The National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova is one of the fourteen statistical offices that have contributed to the World's Women 2020: Trends and Statistics portal, which was launched during

¹⁸⁵ These include annual briefing notes, such as *Statistical Portrait of Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova*, *Situation of Children in the Republic of Moldova*, *Youth in the Republic of Moldova*, *Elderly in the Republic of Moldova*, *Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Moldova*, and *Level of Crime in the Republic of Moldova*; analytical reports, such as *The impact of Covid-19 on labour force indicators in 2020*, *Women and men in the information and communication technology sector*, *Participation of women and men in entrepreneurship*; a household survey *Population access to health services, 2021*; and statistical publications, such as *Education in the Republic of Moldova*, *Aspects of Living standards*, *Labour force in the Republic of Moldova*, *Employment and unemployment*; *Children of Moldova*. In order to analyse the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the situation in the labour market, including by gender, additional data were collected in the Labour Force Survey and disseminated quarterly in the publication *Labour Force, Employment, and Unemployment in the Republic of Moldova* during 2020-2021. The National Bureau of Statistics disseminates quarterly and annually the Statbank database detailed statistical information with time series on population and demographic processes, social statistics, gender statistics, and regional statistics.

the UN World Data Forum, held on October 19-21, 2020, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In the profile of the Republic of Moldova, the theme addressed was social protection and retirement pensions, which are approached from a gender equality perspective. The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) prepared the portal that encapsulates the result of the collective effort of a wide range of contributors from around the world.

Among the specified priorities are the adoption of laws, regulations, or statistical programs/strategies establishing the development of gender statistics; sage of gender-sensitive data in policy formulation and implementation of programs and projects; development of a centralised web-based database and/or dashboard on gender statistics.

39. In the next five years, what are your country's priorities for strengthening national gender statistics?

Specific objective no. 3.2 of the NSDSDP for 2023-2026 stipulates the alignment of official statistics with European and international standards. We plan to achieve it by carrying out research and statistical work, including censuses, in accordance with the provisions of the European Statistical Compendium and the UN framework of indicators for monitoring the SDGs, with specific emphasis on the disaggregation of statistical data in order to ensure the provision of records for the implementation of the principle of "no one left behind" in the monitoring of the NDS "European Moldova 2030" and sectoral policies" (point 33.3 of the NSDSDP 2023-2026). In this context, according to the National Action Plan for the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union for 2024-2027, the NBS plans to carry out in the next 5 years exhaustive and selective statistical surveys for different categories of the population, all with disaggregation of results by sex and other demographic and social dimensions, including:

- Population and Housing Census 2024, taking into account the provisions of Regulation (EC) no. 763/2008;
- Statistical survey on gender-based violence according to the methodological manual for the EU gender surveys
- Violence against women and other forms of interpersonal violence, Eurostat, edition 2021;
- Statistical Survey on the Structure of Earnings Structure;
- Living Conditions and Income Survey (EU SILC);
- European Population Health Interview Survey (EHIS).

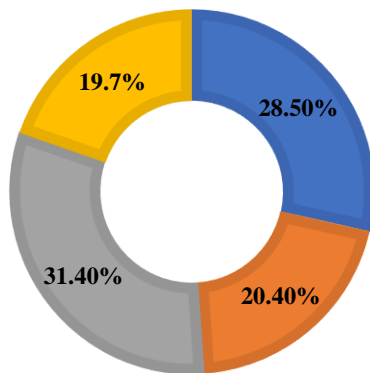
For the next period, we have established the following priorities: reprocessing the existing data (e.g., censuses and surveys) to produce more disaggregated and new gender statistics; conducting new surveys to produce national baseline information on specific topics (e.g., time use, gender-based violence, property ownership, poverty, and disability); production of knowledge products on gender statistics (e.g. user-friendly reports, policy briefs, research papers).

40. What gender-specific indicators has your country prioritised for monitoring progress on the SDGs?

According to the national framework for monitoring the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda (Government Decision no. 953/2022) and the latest exercise of re-examination of the list of SDG indicators (2023), carried out by the NSO, about 132 gender-sensitive indicators (or about 41% of the total number of national SDG indicators) will help to monitor the results related to ensuring gender equality in the 13 Sustainable Development Goals. By type, the 137 gender-sensitive indicators

are distributed as follows: 39 indicators (28.5%) are global, 28 indicators (20.4%) are global adjusted, 43 indicators (31.4%) are global disaggregated and 27 indicators (19.7%) are national proxy.

■ Global
 ■ Global adjusted
■ Global disaggregated
 ■ National proxy



SDG	Total	Fully Available	Partially Available	Missing
SDG 1	16	10	3	3
SDG 2	5	1	4	3
SDG 3	25	19	3	3
SDG 4	19	13	5	1
SDG 5	20	11	4	5
SDG 6	4	3	1	
SDG 7	1		1	
SDG 8	10	5	1	4
SDG 9	2	2		
SDG 10	5	2	2	1
SDG 11	7	3	1	3
SDG 12	0			
SDG 13	3	1	1	1
SDG 14	0			
SDG 15	0			
SDG 16	20	7	6	7
SDG 17	0			
Total	137	77	32	28

According to the available data, the gender-sensitive indicators are distributed as follows: data are fully available for 77 indicators (56.2%); data are partially available for 32 indicators (23.4%); and data are missing for 28 indicators (20.4%).

Since the collection of time-use data in a dedicated statistical survey is challenging in terms of cost and complexity, it was decided to collect these data in an additional (ad-hoc) module to the Labour Force Survey. The module is in line with the latest tools developed for these purposes by the International Labour Organization's Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT). It should be noted that these new tools are still in the testing/piloting stage by ILOSTAT. In order to collect additional data on the SDGs, updates have been planned on topics such as time use, prevalence of violence against women and several statistical surveys (mentioned on p.2/question 39).

41. What data disaggregation is commonly provided by major surveys in your country?

The Household Budget Survey provides disaggregated data by geographical location, residence, income, gender, age, education, disability, and immigration status;

The Labour Force Survey provides disaggregated data by geographical location, residence, income, gender, age, education, marital status, disability, and immigration status;

Statistics on social protection, crime, health, and education are available by geographical location, residence, sex, age, education, and disability.

Most household-based statistical surveys are sample-based (selective/sampling surveys). The challenge is that due to the small number of observed cases, multidimensional disaggregated data (multiple disaggregations) are not always reliable.

CHAPTER VI – CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The Country Report on the Implementation of the Commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Beijing+30 (BPfA) reveals that the Republic of Moldova pays increased and continuous attention to fulfilling the obligations undertaken under the international treaties on human rights and gender equality, confirmed by guaranteeing the principle of equality through a series of organic and ordinary laws.

During the reporting period, the national legislation was supplemented with numerous provisions, which complete the normative framework in the areas of ensuring equality between women and men in various spheres of life, as well as preventing and combating domestic violence. In this context, the Republic of Moldova has adopted the following acts: the Program for Promoting and Ensuring Equality between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for 2023-2027, the National Program on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for 2023-2027, and the National Program for Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for 2023-2027. These documents also reflect the country's commitments in relation to the BPfA, CEDAW, and the 2030 Agenda.

Several sectoral policy documents in the fields of education, employment, economy, finance, health, and security contain information on the gender dimension. At the same time, the national framework for monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda was approved, the gender-sensitive statistical data system was developed, and monitoring actions were carried out on policies implemented through synergies between the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda.

In the context of Moldova's path towards EU integration, the government has started the procedure of transposing the EU directives and regulations, including those on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women.

On the optimistic side, we can emphasise the progress that the Republic of Moldova has made in an increase in the number of women in decision-making positions (members of the Parliament, mayors, local councillors, judges, and personnel in law enforcement and defence sector); an increase in the level of information and awareness of the population and, as a result of deconstruction of stereotypes, the openness of citizens to support women in politics and decision-making positions; inclusion of the gender dimension in numerous sectoral policies; improvement of the skills of the specialists in the field; and an increase in the number of men taking paternity leave.

Positive impact practices include economic empowerment programs for women, especially in rural areas and security zones, victims of GBV; humanitarian support and empowerment programs for refugees from Ukraine; positive fatherhood programs (network of Fathers' Clubs); and work-family reconciliation programs, including the opening of day-care centres at work.

Since gaining EU candidate status in 2022, Moldova has continued to implement critical reforms in 33 chapters of the negotiating framework despite setbacks caused by the conflict in Ukraine. The digitalisation of services, environmental protection, economy, and judiciary reform emerge as key elements in the EU integration path that takes into account gender and inclusiveness in these reforms. These efforts aim to address immediate crises while advancing the long-term development agenda.

In line with the Government's commitment to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is currently implementing a national social assistance reform. This reform aims to strengthen the national social protection system and improve social services and benefits for vulnerable and food-insecure populations.

Despite positive trends in the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, women are underrepresented in Moldova's security and defence sectors. Women are also underrepresented in official dialogue formats that deal with conflict resolution. Furthermore, the persistence of gender-based violence, including domestic violence and sexual harassment in the workplace, remains a significant challenge for fulfilling women's rights to a decent, free of violence life.

Among the significant challenges that Moldova underwent during the reporting period were the COVID-19 pandemic, the humanitarian crisis following the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis, and climate change. Unfortunately, insufficient data on the gender impact of climate change and natural resources management reduces the effectiveness of programs in this area. The war in Ukraine has hampered Moldova's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in tackling poverty and food security.

Moldova remains a country significantly affected by migration processes, with women constituting the majority (54%). Migration leads to the country's depopulation, especially in rural areas. Consequently, we face intensification of ageing processes (women constitute the majority among older people) and gender imbalances, especially in the reproductive age group. It also affects the sustainability of the pension system and the development of the labour market.

We note *the following areas that need strengthening and where the country would need support*: development and capacity building of the institutional mechanism on gender equality; implementation of gender-responsive budgeting; allocation of adequate resources dedicated to programs to ensure gender equality in all spheres of life; economic and social/digital empowerment of women and girls; inclusion of the intersectional approach (by considering the connections between gender, age, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, residence, etc.) in development programming and statistical data collection; preventing and combating gender-based violence, ensuring protection and building resilience of victims of gender-based violence; preventing and diminishing gender stereotypes, and encouraging girls and women's engagement in STEM fields, etc.

Continued efforts are needed to ensure that women and girls from disadvantaged groups (with disabilities, Roma, women living with HIV, women from rural areas, and older women) have access to quality education and health services, social protection, and adequate economic opportunities.

At the same time, among lessons learned, we mention the importance of sustainable partnerships and the ongoing dialogue between all actors (central government authorities, local government, and civil society associations), ensuring transparency in decision-making, and the need to invest in sustainable programs focused on gender needs of different population groups.

We can summarise the report as follows:

- 1) The Republic of Moldova has implemented significant measures to promote gender equality, including legislative changes and policies prohibiting discrimination in the workplace and in pay, as well as sexual harassment in the workplace.

- 2) Programs to support entrepreneurship and access to finance have been expanded, with a particular focus on rural women and vulnerable groups.

- 3) Progress has been made in increasing women's and girls' access to education, particularly in STEM fields, which is crucial for closing the gender gap in the long term.

Consequently, the Republic of Moldova is committed to the following actions:

- 1) Monitor and implement policies, ensuring that measures are applied correctly and effectively.
- 2) Strengthen/expand support programs, including those targeting women entrepreneurs and their access to finance, especially for vulnerable groups.

3) Expand educational initiatives for girls in STEM and ensure that they receive ongoing support in their careers in these fields.

4) Continue awareness-raising campaigns on gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence in all regions of the country.

Ultimately, we reiterate our commitment to advancing gender equality as an integral part of Moldova's journey towards EU integration. Our goal is to accelerate progress and create a more inclusive society.