

MOLDOVA NATIONAL POLICY BRIEF



The objective of this policy brief is to present the current situation and progress made in family support on behalf of the children's rights in Moldova towards achieving quality standards using the quality assurance protocol for family support services developed by the 19 countries participating in the COST Innovators Grant IG18123, QA[4]EuroFam. The aim is to provide key messages on current strengths and recommendations to key audiences, bringing relevant views and appraisals from the group of interdisciplinary experts and representatives of various sectors in the field at the national level.

National Working Group

The National Working Group in Moldova consists of interdisciplinary experts representing various sectors, including social services, education, health, and community development. The group comprises researchers and coordinators from national, regional, and local levels who have collaborated to develop and provide insights into the strengths and recommendations for family support services in Moldova. This team has played a crucial role in collecting data, evaluating current practices, and proposing improvements based on the comprehensive quality assurance protocol.

Consensual responses were provided by members of the Moldovan National Working Group made up of 10 researchers and coordinators of services and social entities at national, regional and local levels in social, education and community sectors¹.

¹ During the informational workshop, we had the honour of hosting over 20 invited experts from various fields, including social services, healthcare, education, and legal sectors. Decision-makers, development partners, civil society representatives, academics, and experts in child rights protection were also present. Despite their initial agreement to contribute to the protocol, only 10 experts were able to complete their inputs. Representatives from central authorities have postponed presenting their opinions. Consequently, the recommendations report and the policy brief reflect the insights of a smaller group of available and responsive experts.

Due to this, the structure of the involved expert group is relatively homogeneous, with a majority of representatives from the academic and educational sectors. Nonetheless, several non-governmental organizations that operate at both national and regional levels have also participated.

1. Contextualization and characterization of family support in Moldova



Q Definition and understanding of family support: Family support in Moldova is conceptualised as a comprehensive framework aimed at fostering the well-being of children and families. It includes various services designed to meet families' developmental, emotional, social, and economic needs. These services focus on prevention, early intervention, and ongoing support to strengthen family units, enhance parental competencies, and ensure the healthy development of children. Family support is delivered through a multidisciplinary approach, involving social workers, educators, healthcare professionals, and legal advisors to provide holistic and integrated care.

Q Family support services in context: Family support services in Moldova are structured through a coordinated network of community-based centers, schools, healthcare facilities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These services are designed to be accessible and responsive, tailored to meet the specific needs of families, especially those in vulnerable situations. Key components include early childhood intervention programs, parental education, mental health services, crisis intervention, and legal assistance. By promoting accessibility and integration across various sectors, Moldova ensures that families receive comprehensive support to address their developmental, emotional, social, and economic needs.

Q Political perspective on family support: Political and constitutional² approach to family support in Moldova is grounded in child protection, family preservation, and social inclusion of children. National strategies, such as the National Strategy for Child Protection 2014-2020 and the National Program for Child Protection 2022-2026³, emphasize expanding professional parental care services, preventing child separation from families, and strengthening institutional capacities. The government collaborates with international organizations and NGOs to implement policies prioritising the child's best interests, promoting family cohesion, and addressing social inequalities. Recent modifications of Law No. 140/2013 on Special Protection of Children at Risk⁴ provide a robust framework for comprehensive family support services.

²The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, Art. 49 "Protection of families and orphaned children" and Art. 50 "Protection of mothers, children and young people" https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=142462&lang=ro#

³Government Decision No 347/2022 " on the approval of the National Program for Child Protection for the years 2022-2026 and the Action Plan for its implementation https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=131899&lang=ro

⁴Law No. 140/2013 on Special Protection of Children at Risk amended by Law 256/2023, https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=139010&lang=ro

2. Key messages from the National Strengths and Recommendations Report



Families and Children

STRENGTHS

1. A robust legal framework that ensures the protection of children's rights and prioritizes their best interests. The implementation and interaction of standards related to ensuring children's rights are carried out in distinct fields of activity (education, health, insurance, specialized services, etc.) and territorial contexts (central, regional and community levels). Legislation mandates that all services consider the child's rights and developmental needs, leading to more child-centred practices.
2. Successful community-based services focus on early intervention and family preservation. Programs such as early childhood intervention and family counselling have been effective in keeping children within their family environments whenever safe and possible, reducing unnecessary institutionalization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Standardize and implement confidentiality protocols to ensure consistent communication with families regarding confidentiality impediments. This includes regular professional training and clear communication guidelines. Develop additional protocols for the work of educational institutions at all levels to ensure the rights of children with disabilities.
2. Establish family support centres in rural and under-resourced urban areas to provide comprehensive services, including counselling, education, healthcare support, and legal advice. This will address disparities in service availability and ensure all families have access to high-quality support. Steps to develop are secure funding, training staff and community engagement.



Professionals

STRENGTHS

1. Moldova has successfully implemented multidisciplinary teams in child protection services, including social workers, psychologists, educators, and healthcare providers. These teams collaborate to provide holistic support for children and their families.
2. In Moldova, continuous professional development programs for family support professionals are a key component of the national strategy to improve child welfare and family support services. These programs are designed to ensure that professionals are knowledgeable about the latest best practices, child rights, and developmental needs. Government and international organizations, such as UNICEF, support the programs, which provide resources, training, and expertise.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide comprehensive training programs on effective family engagement techniques, particularly in rural areas. This includes workshops and seminars to share best practices and new research findings on community-based family support.
2. Develop a standardized family assessment framework across social, educational, health, and justice sectors by creating comprehensive assessment tools, training professionals on their use, and ensuring uniform adoption across all sectors for consistent and effective service delivery. Establishing methods to guarantee that family policies are effective, especially for vulnerable families, children, and youth. This involves creating tools to regularly assess the quality of family support services offered by third-party institutions, like the Children's Rights Ombudsman⁵.



Policymakers

STRENGTHS

1. Comprehensive development of legal and regulatory framework⁶, ensuring comprehensiveness and coordination of activities. The legislative framework provides a detailed roadmap for family support services focusing on child protection measures, family preservation and integrated service delivery across sectors.
2. Successful community engagement initiatives in urban centres like Chisinau actively involve families in decision-making processes, enhancing the responsiveness and effectiveness of family support services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To ensure the expansion of family support services in rural areas, steady and efficient delivery of services by providing the necessary (or adequate) financial resources, and developing a standardized family assessment framework in the social, educational, health, and justice sectors.
2. Investment in ongoing professional development programs for those involved in providing family support (or professional parenting assistance) to vulnerable groups of children and young people, based on effective international practice, ensuring multidisciplinary collaboration. Ensure local community involvement in the planning and delivery of quality family support services.



Academics

STRENGTHS

1. Moldovan universities and research institutions significantly contribute to developing evidence-based family support practices through extensive research initiatives and academic programs. These programs focus on best practices, ethical guidelines, and the latest developments in family support, fostering a robust academic foundation for policy and practice improvements.
2. Collaboration with international organizations and academic institutions enhances the quality of training and research in family support. These partnerships bring global best practices to Moldova and foster a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that academic programs remain current and effective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expand practical training components, including simulation-based exercises and role-playing, to provide real-life scenarios for students. Establish international exchange programs to facilitate knowledge sharing and exposure to diverse methodologies, enriching the academic experience and practical skills of future professionals.
2. Encourage community-based participatory research that involves families and local communities in the research process. This approach ensures that research findings are relevant and directly applicable to the needs of the community, leading to more effective and sustainable family support interventions.



⁵The People's Advocate for the Rights of the Child, also called the Children's Ombudsman or Children's Advocate, ensures the implementation, at the national level, by persons in positions of responsibility at all levels, of the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant international treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party. The Ombudsman for the Rights of the Child provides protection and assistance to the child at the child's request, without requiring the consent of the parents or legal representatives. The People's Advocate for the Rights of the Child may also act as an ex-officio to assist a child who is having difficulty or at risk without seeking the consent of the parents or legal representatives. <https://ombudsman.md/despre-noi/avocatul-poporului-pentru-drepturile-copilului/>

⁶The National Program for Child Protection 2022-2026 includes actions such as expanding professional parental care services, preventing child separation from families, and strengthening institutional capacities to address child protection comprehensively. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=131899&lang=ro

Law No.140/2013 on Special Protection of Children mandates protection measures for children at risk or separated from their parents, including establishing specialised support services and family-type homes. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=139010&lang=ro

Youth Sector Development Strategy „The Youth 2030” aims to create a supportive environment for youth development, focusing on education, employment, health, and civic engagement. This strategy involves youth-friendly services and support for youth employment and entrepreneurship. https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/55-mec_1_2.pdf

The Program "Family" 2022 - Enhances social protection for children and families by providing financial support, developing childcare services, and implementing family support programs. <https://familia.gov.md/>

Law No 367/2022 on alternative childcare services introduces three types of childcare services for children from zero to three years of age: individualized, family-type and workplace-based. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135587&lang=ro https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=139046&lang=ro

3. Insights and lessons learned regarding the quality of family support



1 Cross-Sector Collaboration Enhances Effectiveness

One of the critical insights from Moldova's family support practices is the importance of cross-sector collaboration. Effective family support requires the involvement of various sectors, including health, education, social services, and justice. This integrated approach ensures that all aspects of a family's needs are addressed comprehensively.

2 Importance of Early Intervention

Early intervention programs have proven to be highly effective in preventing more severe problems later on. By addressing issues at an early stage, these programs can mitigate risks and support the healthy development of children and the stability of families.

3 Flexibility, Adaptability, and Empowerment in Family Support Services

Ensuring flexibility, review, update, and relevance of family support services through diverse funding sources other than the budget. Active involvement of families in the design and evaluation of support services contributes to reducing the vulnerability of the targeted population.

4 Community-Based Approaches Enhance Accessibility

Community-based approaches have been particularly effective in making family support services more accessible and relevant to local needs. By situating services within communities, these programs can better understand and respond to the unique challenges faced by families.

5 Lesson Learned

To replicate this success in rural areas, it is crucial to establish structured coordination mechanisms and regular communication channels among different sectors. Ensuring that all stakeholders are on the same page can lead to more effective service delivery and better outcomes for families.

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