

ALTERNATIVE REPORT OF CIVIL SOCIETY FROM THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

*TO THE UN COMMITTEE ON
ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL
RIGHTS
(CESCR)*

I. INTRODUCTION

This report, submitted by the National Youth Council of Moldova / Consiliul Național al Tineretului din Moldova (CNTM)¹ on behalf of its member organizations, provides an integrated assessment of the situation of youth in the Republic of Moldova. The areas analyzed in this document were selected in collaboration with CNTM members and reflect the priorities and concerns of youth organizations. The report draws on a variety of sources, including consultations with CNTM members, relevant studies and reports, as well as policy documents and the legislative framework.

This submission is intended to inform the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (hereinafter: the Committee) about developments and progress made since the Committee's Concluding Observations on the Third Periodic Report of the Republic of Moldova (E/C.12/MDA/CO/3, 2017), which remain the key reference framework for this report.

Given the constraints of the report's length, the focus is on the following thematic areas: Youth Civic Participation (Articles 13 and 15), the Right to Work and Decent Working Conditions for Youth (Articles 6 and 7), the Right to Inclusive and Quality Education (Articles 13 and 14), the Right to Health (Article 12).

II. YOUTH CIVIC PARTICIPATION (ARTICLES 13, 15)

The Republic of Moldova has taken major steps in last years to align its national youth policies with international standards and frameworks on participatory rights, particularly through the Youth Law (2016) [2] and the Youth Sector Development Strategy "Youth 2030"[3]. The Ministry of Education and Research, through the National Agency for Youth Programs, is responsible for developing, implementing, and evaluating youth policies.

[1] CNTM is an umbrella structure comprising 37 youth organizations that promote young people's rights and represent the interests of youth organizations in the development, implementation, and evaluation of youth policies. Established on 18 February 1999, CNTM operates based on the principles of solidarity, organizational and functional autonomy, transparency, freedom of opinion and expression, democratic governance, full equality of members, and professionalism.

CNTM's mission is to empower young people in Moldova to actively participate in society, advocate for their interests before the government and both local and international institutions and support the development of youth associative structures through training, information, advocacy, consultancy services, and sub granting programs.

[2] Available in RO: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=138532&lang=ro

[3] Available in RO: https://edu.gov.md/sites/default/files/strategia_de_tineret_ro_1.pdf

The Law on Youth and related regulations require local authorities to involve young people in policymaking and to create tools that support their civic participation. Youth are defined as individuals aged 14 to 35, covering both adolescents and young adults. The "Youth 2030" Strategy reaffirms the state's commitment to fostering a culture of participation among youth, with one of its three strategic pillars focused specifically on civic and decision-making engagement. While the national legal and policy framework is broadly aligned with international and European standards, implementation remains inconsistent and limited in practice.

2. Mechanisms and Initiatives for Participation

Several national programs have been launched in recent years with the stated objective of fostering youth participation:

- Youth Grants Program – Provides limited funding for youth-led initiatives.
- Youth Capital Program – Designates an annual locality as a hub for youth policy experimentation and promotion.
- Development of Youth Centers and Local Youth Councils – Seeks to establish or support structures of youth representation and services at the community level.

Legal provisions empower youth to create Local Youth Councils, which are intended to act as informal participatory bodies at the local level. These councils are envisioned as platforms for young people to express their needs and influence local decision-making processes. Similarly, the Youth Law assigns to local authorities the responsibility to consult with youth and foster their engagement in governance processes. In practice, these structures exist in a significant number of areas but operate unevenly[4]. They are frequently dependent on individual motivation, local leadership, and donor support. In many cases, Local Youth Councils lack sufficient funding, clear mandates, or trained facilitators to operate effectively.

[4] CNTM, Report on Youth and Participation in Decision-Making Processes: Progress, Challenges, and Opportunities, Chişinău, 2023. Available at: <https://cntm.md/resurse/raport-privind-tinerii-si-participarea-in-procesele-decizionale-progres-provocari-si-opportunitati/>

In many cases, Local Youth Councils lack sufficient funding, clear mandates, or trained facilitators to operate effectively. Further, while youth structures are often consulted by public authorities, such consultations are generally superficial and do not lead to the integration of youth perspectives into actual policies. Recommendations made by young people are rarely implemented, and feedback mechanisms are absent[5]. Although their engagement is encouraged in theory, in practice no dedicated programs or resources are allocated to this age group[6].

Funding for the youth sector in Moldova has increased in recent years, with notable budget growth in 2023-2024. However, the sector still receives a modest share of GDP, and budget execution has been insufficient, leading to underutilization of allocated funds and limited youth activities[7]. Youth-related expenditures represent only about 4.8% of total local level II budgets within the combined “Culture, Sports, Youth, Religion, and Recreation” subprograms, but increased in 2024 in comparison with 2023.

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Moldovan Ombudsman, Thematic Report “Respect for Children’s Right to Be Heard and to Participate in Decision-Making”, 2024, pp. 41–42. Available in Romanian: <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/raport-tematic-respectarea-dreptului-copiiilor-la-opinie-si-implicare-in-luarea-deciziilor-2024>

[7] CNTM, Report on the Evaluation of Expenditures for the Youth Sector at the Central Level (2025), available at: <https://cntm.md/resurse/raport-privind-evaluarea-cheltuielilor-destinate-sectorului-de-tineret-la-nivel-central/>

3. Key Challenges and Structural Barriers

Despite the relatively comprehensive legal framework, significant barriers continue to limit meaningful youth participation in civic life. These include:

a) Tokenism and Symbolic Participation - participation is often reduced to forms of volunteering, community clean-ups, or event planning rather than involvement in formal policymaking. Such engagement can be demotivating and performative.

b) Exclusion of Marginalized Groups - youth from marginalized groups – including Roma communities, youth with disabilities, and rural youth – face systemic exclusion from participatory structures. Discrimination, lack of accessible information, and absence of adapted procedures hinder their involvement.

c) Lack of Accountability and Feedback -authorities are not required to report back to youth on how their input influenced policy outcomes. This absence of transparency and feedback leads to mistrust and disengagement.

d) Underfunding of the Youth Sector - most districts allocate extremely modest budgets for youth programming – often as little as 15,000 to 20,000 MDL (approx. €750–1,000) annually. Alarming, some districts allocate no funding at all to the youth sector. This chronic underfunding severely undermines the sustainability of youth engagement infrastructure and limits the capacity to train and retain qualified local staff.

4. Recommendations:

- Provide regular training for public servants on youth engagement and co-management practices.

- Develop and disseminate methodological tools and co-management structures for involving youth in decision-making, tailored to local capacities.

- Increase public funding for youth, focusing on participation and outreach. Prioritize sustainable investments with transparent and efficient management, especially given demographic challenges.

[8] CNTM, Study: Evaluation of Expenditures Allocated to the Youth Sector within Level II Local Public Authority Budgets (2025), available at: <https://cntm.md/resurse/studiu-evaluarea-cheltuielilor-alocate-sectorului-de-tineret-in-cadrul-bugetelor-apl-de-nivelul-ii/>

[9] Ibid.

[10] CNTM opinion, available in RO: <https://cntm.md/acte/aviz-asupra-planului-de-actiuni-al-ministerului-educatiei-si-cercetarii-pentru-anul-2025-pe-componenta-tineret/>

- Ensure accessible grant mechanisms for youth-led initiatives, with particular attention to those from marginalized communities. In addition, implement Article 16¹ of the Youth Law on Strategic Partnerships, considering the opinion of CNTM regarding this new mechanism for engaging youth CSOs in the implementation of state strategic priorities on youth.
- Design programs tailored to Roma youth, youth with disabilities, and those in rural areas and provide accessible formats, translation, and adapted procedures to ensure inclusive participation. Allocate an inclusion budget (grant program) addressed to youth CSOs which will facilitate inclusiveness of youth organizations and their initiatives.

III. RIGHT TO WORK AND DECENT CONDITIONS FOR YOUTH (ARTICLES 6, 7)

1. Overview of Challenges Faced

Young people face significant challenges in securing decent employment and working conditions. Despite efforts by the state to support youth employment and skills development, the labor market experiences persistent issues such as high unemployment and NEET rate (youth aged 15–29 who are not employed, not enrolled in formal education, and not participating in any courses or training), informality, and insufficient access to meaningful internships or vocational training. The transition from education to work remains fragile for many youths, especially in the core working ages of 20–29 years, which has seen substantial population decline in recent years.

2. Youth Demographic Trends

Between 2019 and 2023, Moldova experienced a notable decline in its youth population, particularly within the economically active age groups. While the population of adolescents aged 14–19 slightly decreased in absolute numbers (down by 3.9 thousand or 2.3%), their relative share of the total youth population (ages 14–34) rose from 22.6% to 26.9%.

This rise, however, reflects a sharper decline among older youth:

[11] National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, https://statistica.gov.md/ro/rezultatele-preliminare-ale-recensamantului-populatiei-si-locuintelor-2024-10077_61626.html (accessed on 2 August 2025);

Age Group	Share in Youth Population 2019 (%)	Share in Youth Population 2023 (%)
14–19 years	22.6	26.9
20–24 years	21.1	18.3
25–29 years	26.6	24
30–34 years	29.7	30.9

SOURCE: CNTM, REPORT ON YOUTH AND PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES: PROGRESS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES, PAGE. 21, CITED ABOVE

The population of youth aged 20–24 fell dramatically by 28.4% (44.8 thousand fewer), while those aged 25–29 declined by 25.7% (50.9 thousand fewer). The 30–34 age group also decreased, albeit more modestly by 14.4% (31.9 thousand fewer). Also, according to the 2024 Census results, young people aged 15–24 represent the most affected age group, with a sharp decline of nearly 38%—from 409,300 in 2014 to 255,400 in 2024[11]. This age group now makes up only 62.4% of its previous size. The decrease is largely driven by widespread youth emigration and a declining birth rate in preceding years. This demographic change has significant implications for the labor market and youth economic participation.

Also, in 2024, the absolute poverty rate for the overall population in Moldova reached 33.6%, an increase of 2.0 percentage points compared to 2023. Among children, the poverty rate was also 33.6%, but this reflects a sharper increase of 3.4 percentage points over the previous year[1]. Children living in rural areas remain significantly more affected than those in urban areas. In 2024, the absolute child poverty rate was: 46.6% in rural areas and 18.6% in urban areas. Also, young people face discrimination at all stages of employment, from recruitment to dismissal. Employers often set excessive experience requirements to exclude inexperienced youth and avoid investing in their training[13].

[13] CNTM, Evaluation Report on the Impact of Law No. 105/2018 on Promoting Employment and Unemployment Insurance on Youth Employment (2023), available at: <https://cntm.md/resurse/raport-de-evaluare-cu-privire-la-impactullegii-nr-105-2018-cu-privire-la-promovareaocuparii-fortei-de-munca-si-asigurarea-desomaj-asupra-angajarii-tinerilor/>

3. Labor Market Participation and Employment Challenges

Youth participation in the labour market remains low. According to 2024 data, only 32.1% of individuals aged 15–29 is economically active[1]. Also, employment levels among youth are significantly lower than the national average. Only 29.8% of those aged 15–29 is employed, compared to 55.7% among the working-age population as defined by national legislation. This gap results in economic vulnerability and limited access to decent or stable jobs for young people. Unemployment disproportionately affects youth, especially in urban areas. The unemployment rate among those aged 15–24 stands at 9.8%, with higher rates in urban areas (10.5%) compared to rural areas (8.5%)[15].

Informal employment is also a major concern. Around 22.3% of young workers were employed informally in 2023. 7.5% of young employees worked without a formal employment contract (undeclared work). A heightened vulnerability in the labour market is observed among persons with disabilities, Roma individuals—who face discrimination in accessing employment—and girls and women, who are often expected to take on household and family care responsibilities. Consequently, employers tend to be reluctant to hire people from socially vulnerable groups due to prevailing prejudices and societal stereotypes[15]. These figures point to systemic problems in formalizing youth employment and protecting workers' rights, exposing many young people to precarious and unstable working conditions.

4. Structural and Policy Gaps

An important success to highlight is the implementation of paid internship programs, which have been effective at the central government level in increasing youth employability. These programs currently exist only within central institutions. The paid internship initiative should be expanded to include local public administration authorities at both the first and second levels[16]. This expansion should clearly define the roles and responsibilities of local authorities in identifying and recruiting eligible young beneficiaries. Such a step will enhance access to these valuable opportunities, particularly for youth in the NEET category .

[15] CNTM, Evaluation Report on the Impact of Law No. 105/2018 on Promoting Employment and Unemployment Insurance on Youth Employment (2023), cited above.

Further, the Moldovan labor market presents structural barriers that hinder young people's access to decent work:

- Non-sufficient youth-targeted employment policies: Although national strategies recognize youth employment as a priority, concrete measures such as internship programs, vocational training, and career counseling remain underdeveloped and underfinanced active measures or inconsistently implemented as results Moldova having higher youth NEET rate in Europe.
- Limited access to internships and skills development: Practical work experience is crucial for youth employability, yet many young Moldovans lack access to internship opportunities that could provide relevant skills and networking.
- Gender disparities and urban-rural divide: Employment challenges disproportionately affect young men and those living in urban areas, as indicated by the higher unemployment rates among young males and urban youth.
- Migration pressures: Persistent lack of local opportunities incentivizes youth emigration, exacerbating demographic decline and labor shortages in key sectors.

5. Recommendations:

- The state must make greater efforts to diversify the occupational opportunities and make them attractive and secure for young people who would be interested in working at home, as an alternative to emigrating abroad for the same purpose.
- Continuing reforms and targeted actions to increase youth employability remain crucial, with special focus on socially vulnerable groups and NEET youth.
- Develop targeted youth employment policies that include incentives for businesses to hire young workers, subsidized internships, and apprenticeships linked to labor market needs. Support entrepreneurship and self-employment among youth through accessible financial and training programs. Increase funding for active employment measures implemented by the National Employment Agency (ANOFM) to enhance their capacity to support youth inclusion in the labor market[18]. Adequate financial resources are essential to improve the effectiveness of training programs, job placement services, and other initiatives aimed at boosting youth employability and reducing unemployment.

[16] Ibid.

[17] CNTM, Evaluation Report on the Impact of Law No. 105/2018 on Promoting Employment and Unemployment Insurance on Youth Employment (2023), cited above.

[18] CNTM, Study, Existența, eficiența și funcționarea platformelor și programelor privind angajarea tinerilor în câmpul muncii.

·Improve data collection and monitoring mechanisms on youth employment, informality, and skills mismatch to inform evidence-based policymaking.

IV. RIGHT TO INCLUSIVE AND QUALITY EDUCATION (ARTICLES 13-14)

The Committee recommended:

- a) Counter low enrolment rates among Roma children and young people in the rural areas and the high dropout rates, including among children of Moldovan migrant workers abroad, at all levels of education;
- (b) Improve educational materials and school facilities, including water and sanitation facilities, and increase the number of young teachers, including by improving salaries and benefits;
- (c) Increase access to inclusive education for students with disabilities;
- (d) Increase the opportunities for students of regional languages to be taught in their mother tongue.

a) Enrolment Rates Among Roma Children and Youth in Rural Areas and High Dropout Rates

Roma children continue to face extremely low school enrolment rates. For example, in 2023, in Soroca city, only 10.5% of Roma children aged 7–15 was enrolled in school; similarly low rates are observed in Edineț (11%) and Râșcani (22%), with Otaci slightly higher at 30%[19].

Locality	Total Roma Children (ages 7–	Enrolled Children	Enrollment Rate (%)
Soroca city	480	50	10.5
Otaci town	472	140	30
Edineț city	295	32	11
Râșcani town	228	51	22

[9] Ombudsman for Children's Rights, Report on the Respect of the Right to Education of Roma Children in the Republic of Moldova, pp. 24–25 (Chisinau, 2023), supported by UNICEF. Available in Romanian: <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/respectarea-dreptului-la-educatie-a-copiiilor-de-etnie-roma/>

In the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year, 293,592 pupils aged 6/7–16 were enrolled in primary and lower secondary education. A total of 269 pupils dropped out, with a dropout rate of 0.09%. Of these, 67 were Roma pupils, accounting for nearly 25% of dropouts[1], which are significantly disproportionate to their share in the overall pupils.

Economic hardship plays a significant role in educational exclusion: inadequate housing conditions, unstable employment for parents, and the prioritization of basic survival needs often force families to send only one child to school, while others remain out of the education system[21]. These factors contribute to persistently high dropout and non-enrolment rates among Roma children, perpetuating cycles of marginalization and social exclusion.

In most urban localities, there is a lack of a centralized, reliable, and updated database regarding the total number of Roma children of school age (7–16 years), including those with registered or unregistered temporary residence, those temporarily abroad, or those visiting for indeterminate periods. Persistent discrepancies in statistical data provided by local authorities obstruct accurate calculation of enrolment and non-enrolment rates for Roma children in most urban areas and severely limits effective monitoring and targeted interventions.

In 2022, was approved the Support Program for the Roma Population in the Republic of Moldova for 2022–2025[1]. This program targets nine priority areas including education, health, employment, social protection, combating discrimination, and participation in public life. However, Moldovan Ombudsman highlighted persistent challenges such as poverty, unemployment, school dropout, and discrimination. For the program to have a real impact, effective implementation based on rigorous monitoring, adequate financial resources, and cooperation between public authorities and Roma civil society is essential[23].

[21] Ombudsman for Children's Rights, Report on the Respect of the Right to Education of Roma Children in the Republic of Moldova, cited above

[22] Available in Ro: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=133208&lang=ro

[23] Ombudsman for Children's Rights, Report on the Respect of the Right to Education of Roma Children in the Republic of Moldova, cited above.

b) Educational Materials, School Facilities, and Recruitment of Young Teachers

The Government Decision No. 492/2024 establishes minimum sanitary requirements for educational institutions in the Republic of Moldova[1], including the location of sanitary groups on each floor, special facilities for girls' hygiene, as well as norms on accessibility, privacy and hygiene. However, the implementation of these norms remains difficult.

Indicator	Number of institutions	Without access / equipment	% with access / equipment	% without access /
Total number of educational	1,313	—	—	—
With access to drinking water	1,061	252	80.80%	19.20%
Equipped with indoor toilets	1,165	148	88.70%	11.30%
Equipped with hygiene products	1,148	165	87.50%	12.50%

SOURCE: RESPONSE OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH TO AN OFFICIAL INFORMATION REQUEST, JULY 2025.

Based on the data presented[25], progress is evident—in 2025, with over 80% of institutions having access to drinking water and indoor toilets—hundreds of schools still lack essential infrastructure. Notably, 1 in 5 institutions does not have access to potable water, and more than 160 are not adequately equipped with hygiene products, which raises serious concerns regarding the health, dignity, and safety of students, especially in rural and underserved areas. These disparities underline the further need to improve basic infrastructure in schools, especially in rural areas. c) Access to Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities

At the beginning of the 2024/25 academic year, 11.8 thousand students with special educational needs and disabilities were enrolled in primary and general secondary education institutions across the country. The vast majority (95.6%) attended mainstream general education schools, while 4.4% were enrolled in special schools for children with intellectual or physical disabilities[26].

[24] Available at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=145136&lang=ro

[25] Response of the Ministry of Education and Research to an official information request, July 2025.

[1] National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, *Situația copiilor în Republica Moldova în anul 2024*, cited above. (accessed on 25 July 2025).

Most educational institutions in the Republic of Moldova remain physically inaccessible or only partially accessible to people with disabilities. The 2024 UNICEF Sociological Study confirms that more than half of surveyed parents and teachers consider educational institutions insufficiently adapted for children with reduced mobility, citing the lack of essential infrastructure such as ramps, accessible restrooms, and appropriate signage[27]. This situation is particularly acute in rural areas, where schools exhibit even lower levels of accessibility, significantly limiting the mobility, autonomy, and full participation of students with physical disabilities in the learning process. Inaccessible infrastructure not only impedes access to education but also contributes to the broader social exclusion of young people with disabilities[28]. The vocational education and training (VET) institutions in Moldova in majority of cases lack adapted informational and physical infrastructure for students with disabilities, where accessibility being limited just to ramps and toilets. As a result, many refrain from enrolling in these institutions or rely heavily on the assistance of peers to navigate physical barriers[29].

A key factor underlying this issue is the absence of a dedicated national financing mechanism for infrastructure adaptation in both general and vocational education systems. Without targeted investment and structural reforms, educational inclusion for students with disabilities will remain limited and ineffective.

Also, in Moldova, bullying remains a significant barrier to inclusive education and the overall development of children. While no single factor automatically places a child at risk of bullying or becoming a bully, certain groups are disproportionately vulnerable depending on the environment. Children with disabilities, those from socially vulnerable families, and individuals from ethnic or sexual minorities consistently face a heightened risk of being targeted by bullying[30]. In educational settings, this hostility often results in exclusion, increased absenteeism, and diminished academic and social outcomes.

[27] UNICEF Moldova, Inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs in the Education System: Sociological Study, 2024.

[28] CNTM, NGOs Information to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2025. Available at: [24] Available at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=145136&lang=ro

[25] Response of the Ministry of Education and Research to an official information request, July 2025.

[1] National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Situația copiilor în Republica Moldova în anul 2024, cited above, (accessed on 25 July 2025).

[29] Ibid.

[30] Terre des hommes Moldova and UNICEF Moldova. Școala fără bullying. Recomandări pentru prevenirea, identificarea și intervenția în cazurile de bullying în instituțiile de învățământ. 2021, p. 8. https://mec.gov.md/sites/default/files/recomandari_bullying_rom.pdf.

d) Opportunities for Students of Regional Languages to Be Taught in Their Mother Tongue

In the 2024–2025 academic year, the Ministry of Education and Research published 31 textbooks in minority languages, covering all education levels: 2 for primary, 23 for lower secondary, and 6 for upper secondary education. These textbooks support instruction in Bulgarian, Gagauz, Ukrainian, and Russian languages, ensuring access to education in pupils' mother tongues[31]. Most textbooks were Russian-language translations of national curricula textbooks, while a pilot curriculum for Gagauz language instruction in grades I–IV was rolled out in 48 schools, benefiting 1351 pupils.[32]

Education Level	Number of Titles	Languages Covered	Total Copies (approx.)
Primary	2	Russian, Ukrainian	~9,100
Lower Secondary	23	Russian, Gagauz, Bulgarian, Ukrainian	~160,000+
Upper Secondary (Lyceum)	6	Russian, Ukrainian	~33,000+
Total	31		~200,000+ copies

SOURCE: RESPONSE OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION TO AN OFFICIAL INFORMATION REQUEST, JULY 2025

For the 2024–2025 school year, over 20,000 pupils are studying in national minority languages across primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary levels.

Language	Total Pupils	Grades I–IV	Grades V–IX	Grades X–XII	Number of Schools
Bulgarian	4,950	1,922	2,419	600	24
Gagauz	12,269	4,864	6,230	1,098	41
Ukrainian	2,938	1,220	1,462	221	30

SOURCE: SIXTH STATE REPORT SUBMITTED BY THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA UNDER THE CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES, 2025, P. 57

[31] Response of the Ministry of Education and Research to an official information request, July 2025

[32] Sixth Report submitted by the Republic of Moldova under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Council of Europe, 2025, p. 24. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/6th-sr-moldova-en/1680b51635>

There are tangible opportunities for students belonging to national minorities in Moldova to study in their mother tongue. The provision of dedicated textbooks, tailored curricula, and language instruction across all educational levels reflects the state's commitment to cultural and linguistic inclusion. However, sustained efforts are still needed to strengthen the quality, accessibility, and consistency of mother-tongue education, particularly through continued curriculum development, teacher training, and support for underrepresented languages.

Recommendations:

- Conduct national and local awareness campaigns to combat discrimination against Roma children and promote intercultural understanding in schools. Integrate anti-bias training for teachers and school administrators and develop inclusive education strategies tailored to Roma learners' needs.
- Establish a reliable and disaggregated database on Roma children (ages 7–16), including those with temporary or unregistered residence, to enable effective monitoring of enrolment and dropout trends.
- Provide financial and social support (school meals, transportation, learning materials) to economically vulnerable Roma families to address root causes of school dropout.
- Accelerate investments in school infrastructure, prioritizing rural and underserved areas to ensure 100% of institutions have access to drinking water, functional indoor toilets, and hygiene products.
- Support the continuous development and widespread dissemination of minority-language textbooks and curricular materials across all education levels.
- Invest in teacher training programs specific to minority-language instruction to foster a robust and culturally inclusive education system that reflects the country's linguistic diversity.

V. RIGHT TO HEALTH (ARTICLE 12)

The Committee is concerned at:

- (a) The limited access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including modern contraceptives, particularly for young persons, Roma women and women with disabilities;

- (b) The lack of compulsory sexuality education in school, despite legal obligations, which leads to a high incidence of teenage pregnancy and early marriage due to pregnancy, as well as HIV and sexually transmitted infections among adolescents;
- (c) The lack of coverage of abortion services under health insurance benefits, which leads to a large number of clandestine abortions[33]

a) Access to Youth-Friendly Health Services

The Republic of Moldova has established a network of more 40 youth-friendly health centers (“Youth Clinics”) at the primary health care level, aimed at addressing the specific health needs of adolescents and young people. These clinics offer health care and counselling services related to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV prevention, unplanned pregnancies, mental health, violence, trauma, stigma, and discrimination. To improve accessibility for persons with disabilities, 30 of these centers have been equipped with gynecological chairs adapted for girls and women with disabilities.

While contraceptives are available through these youth clinics, there is an overall insufficient availability of free or subsidized contraceptives, and limited outreach or public information campaigns targeting young people, especially in remote areas. Also, despite the existence of a relevant legal and policy framework—including the National Health Strategy—access to youth-friendly, confidential, and inclusive health services remain poor. Many primary healthcare facilities lack tailored services and trained professionals able to address the specific needs of adolescents and young adults

Marginalized groups, such as Roma youth, adolescents living in rural areas, and the youth with disabilities, continue to face serious barriers in accessing healthcare. These include persistent stigma, poor geographic coverage, and limited financial means. Economic hardship also significantly impacts youth access to health services: over 13% of young men (aged 18–29) report that they cannot afford a medical consultation, while 14.2% of young women in the same age group cannot cover the cost of transportation or medication[34]. In addition, abortion services are not covered by the national public health insurance system[35], increasing the risk of unsafe or clandestine abortions—particularly for low-income and rural youth.

[33] CESCR Concluding Observations (E/C.12/MDA/CO/4), paras. 11–12.

b) Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and Mental Health Education

Despite Moldova's legal commitments, sexuality education remains non-compulsory, inconsistent, and poorly integrated into school curricula[1]. Where education is provided, it tends to focus on biological aspects while avoiding sensitive but essential topics such as consent, relationships, gender identity, and power dynamics. Teachers often lack adequate training, and there is no standardized national curriculum on comprehensive sexuality education.

Mental health education is similarly underprioritized. While mental health challenges among youth have increased in recent years, few accessible support services are available at community level, especially in rural or underfunded schools. Stigma related to both mental health and sexuality contributes to youth disengagement from care.

Relevant Data and Trends:

HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) Incidence Among Youth

- In 2023, 238 young people aged 15–34 were newly diagnosed with HIV—a 2.1% decrease compared to 2022[37]. The boys represented 62.2% of the cases, an increase from 56.4% in 2019.
- The largest share of new infections was among those aged 30–34 (49.2%), followed by 25–29 (31.5%), and 15–24 (19.3%)[38].
- Among youth aged 15–24, the HIV incidence was 19.4 per 100,000; for 25–34, the rate was 64.1 per 100,000.

Although the trend shows a mild decline in new cases, stigma, discrimination, and lack of youth-specific HIV services persist. People living with HIV, including young people, remain among the most excluded from public services and are subject to social stigma that hampers their full participation in society[39].

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs):

[34] Center Partnership for Development (CPD), Unequal Moldova: The Reality of Vulnerabilities in 2025 and the Way Forward, Chişinău, 2025. Available at: https://progen.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Moldova-Inegala-2025_ROEN.pdf

[35] Government of Moldova Report to CESC, paras. 26–29.

[36] Education Code of the Republic of Moldova, 2014; National Health Strategy 2030

[37] Public Medical-Sanitary Institution “Hospital of Dermatology and Communicable Diseases,” 2023

[38] Official data provided by National Bureau of Statistics, https://statistica.gov.md/index.php/ro/tinerii-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2023-9578_61426.html

[39] UNAIDS Moldova, Country Data Overview, 2023.

- In 2023, 685 STI cases were recorded among young people aged 15–29, representing a 17.9% decrease compared to 2022[40]. 44.7% of cases occurred in men aged 20–29.
- Gonorrhea incidence was highest among men aged 20–29 (117.5 per 100,000), while syphilis incidence peaked among girls aged 18–19 (473.7 per 100,000).

These figures signal gaps in early sexuality education, prevention mechanisms, and youth-centered sexual health services, especially for adolescent girls.

Key Challenges:

- Non-compulsory and inconsistent sexuality education in schools.
- Lack of youth-tailored SRH services, including inadequate availability of free contraceptives.
- Exclusion of abortion services from public health coverage, increasing unsafe procedures.
- Poor mental health infrastructure, particularly for adolescents.
- Stigmatization of HIV-positive youth and sexual minorities, especially in rural areas.

Recommendations

- Make sexuality education compulsory at all school levels and ensure curricula are comprehensive, age-appropriate, and inclusive of gender and rights-based content.
- Expand access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, including the distribution of free modern contraceptives in schools and community centers.
- Strengthen the integration of mental health services into schools, youth centers, and local health services with a focus on accessibility and stigma reduction.
- Train healthcare providers in adolescent-sensitive communication, confidentiality, and non-discriminatory care.
- Collect and disaggregate data on youth health—including HIV, STIs, mental health, and service access—to guide evidence-based policy.
- Involve youth in policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of health services that affect them.

VI. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

[40] Official data provided by National Bureau of Statistics, cited above

Despite Moldova's commitments to uphold the economic, social, and cultural rights of young people, the implementation of youth-related rights remains fragmented, underfunded, and inconsistently prioritized across sectors. This is particularly visible in areas such as employment, education, health, or civic participation.

1. Cross-sectoral Gaps in Youth Rights Implementation

Although there is a relatively comprehensive legal framework on youth, there is limited coordination between sectors (education, labor, health, and social protection) to address the interlinked challenges faced by young people. Roma youth, youth with disabilities, and those living in rural or economically disadvantaged areas remain at the margins of many public policies. Participatory mechanisms are insufficiently institutionalized or funded to ensure the meaningful involvement of youth in shaping public policy. Civic engagement is too often reduced to symbolic activities, with limited pathways for youth input to influence decision-making processes at local or national level.

2. Structural and Policy Reforms Needed

Substantive reforms are needed to translate legal commitments into practical, inclusive, and well-funded programs:

- In employment, persistent youth unemployment, informality, and discrimination — particularly affecting youth with disabilities, Roma and girls — require targeted policies such as subsidized internships, support for entrepreneurship, and paid traineeships at local level. NEET youth need dedicated reintegration programs.
- In education, structural barriers such as high dropout rates among Roma, lack of inclusive infrastructure, and insufficient access to quality teaching persist. Sanitation and accessibility standards remain unmet in many rural schools.
- In health, access to sexual and reproductive services remains weak due to non-compulsory sexuality education, lack of public coverage for abortion, and discrimination in service provision.

3. Integration of Youth Rights into National Human Rights and Development Strategies

Youth rights must be recognized not only within youth-specific strategies but as integral components of Moldova's national development, inclusion, and human rights agendas. This includes:

- Mainstreaming youth-related indicators into national human rights monitoring frameworks
- Ensuring full youth representation in policy development and budgeting processes.
- Strengthening youth-related data systems with disaggregation by age, gender, ethnicity, disability, and residence.
- Ensuring legal commitments are reflected in practice, with clear accountability mechanisms, timelines, and dedicated funding.