

**COST Action CA17114**

Transdisciplinary solutions to  
cross sectoral disadvantage  
in youth (YOUNG-IN)

**WG5**



**Working paper series**

# **Youth-oriented policies beyond ideal-typical welfare regimes in Europe: Situation and initiatives from the perspective of youth transition regimes**

## **Moldova**

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This WP series contributes to the main aims of YOUNG-IN and WG5 (Knowledge-based social investment policy for youth) by aiming to:

- 1) Describe today's situation of youth in our nine case countries based on characteristics perceived to be the most relevant by the literature of Youth Transition Regimes (YTR);
- 2) Give an overview of the main policy initiatives targeted at youth within key policy areas relevant for YTR.

This WP is structured as follows: Part I gives a harmonised comparative overview of the existing situation in the analysed nine countries in comparison with EU28 (the analyses cover period before Brexit, thus kept EU28 instead of EU27). Part II consists of nine chapters about youth-oriented policy initiatives in those countries in two recent decades across policy areas especially relevant for youth (education, labour market, social inclusion, participation and housing). Part III concludes with an executive summary that compares the countries' youth-oriented policy directions in the modified framework of YTR.

The structure and authorship of respective chapters are as follows (current chapter highlighted):

- ▶ Part I: A comparative introduction of situation of youth, Triin Lauri
- ▶ Part II: Country reports on youth oriented policies:
  - Youth-oriented policies in Bulgaria (BG), Veneta Krasteva
  - Youth-oriented policies in Switzerland (CH), Berihun Wagaw, Matthias Drilling, Semhar Negash
  - Youth-oriented policies in Estonia (EE), Anu Toots and Triin Lauri
  - Youth-oriented policies in Spain (ES), Francisco Javier Moreno-Fuentes, Pau Marí-Klose
  - Youth-oriented policies in Lithuania (LT), Daiva Skučienė, Natalija Mažeikienė
  - Youth-oriented policies in Latvia (LV), Anna Broka
  - **Youth-oriented policies in Moldova (MD), Crismaru Mariana**
  - Youth-oriented policies in Malta (MT), Sue Vella
  - Youth-oriented policies in Turkey (TR), Hande Barlin, Nilufer Korkmaz Yaylagul
- ▶ Conclusion, Anu Toots, Triin Lauri

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## Brief information on country

**The Republic of Moldova (RM)** is a landlocked, low middle-income country in Eastern Europe, bordered to the west by Romania and to the north, east and south by Ukraine. The usual resident population is 2 681.7 thousand persons (2019), out of whom 57% live in the rural area. The ethnic structure of the population: 82.1% - Moldovans/Romanians; 6.6% - Ukrainians; 4.6% - Gagauz; 4.1% - Russians; and the other ethnicities - 2.6% (Census, 2014). The country is undergoing major demographic changes, characterised by population decline and ageing. Migration from RM has been progressively increasing, with an estimated third of the working-age population currently abroad.

The Human Development Index (HDI) of RM is 0.711 (2018), positioning it at 107 out of 189 countries and territories (UNDP, 2019), which is below the average for countries in the high human development group and below the average for countries in Europe and Central Asia.

RM is a parliamentary republic with a president as head of state and a prime minister as head of government. RM is a member of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, Partnership for Peace, the World Trade Organization, and other international organisations. RM signed an EU Association Agreement in 2014.

## Part II. Main youth related initiatives in key policy areas

### 2.1. Education policy beyond the lower secondary level

In RM, the Education Code (2014) is one of the main strategic documents providing a conceptual and legal framework for the design, organisation, implementation and development of the education system. In 2014, the Strategy for Development of Education (2014–2020) “Education 2020” was also adopted. It stipulates education as “a national priority in the RM” and put it at the centre of all public policies. This strategy is in line with the National Development Strategy – Moldova 2020, one of the main objectives of which is to link the education system to labour market needs for increasing labour productivity and employment in the economy. Another important policy document is the Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy (2013–2020) that gives a coherent vision of the VET system and aims at modernising and optimising vocational and technical education to enhance the competitiveness of the national economy (ETF, 2020). The financial resources and technical assistance have been assured by the European Training Foundation (ETF). The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) is the main implementing institution for all the strategies and laws.

Generally, the objectives of reference documents are to increase access to education for all children and young people, including vulnerable groups, and to provide quality education at every level, from early childhood to higher education, ensuring that studies are relevant to life, for active citizenship and career success. In order to achieve these goals, there were continuous changes in the education policy of the RM: decentralising managerial positions,

shifting to a financing system per pupil/student, optimising networks of educational institutions, continuous training of teachers and managers, etc.

### **2.1.1. Policies against school drop-out, low achievement & NEET**

In accordance with the Education Code of RM (2014), the government has issued an order (2015) to approve the instruction with measures for preventing and combating school dropout and absenteeism in general education. This document is in line with the Strategy for Child Protection (2014-2020) concerning special protection of children at risk and those separated from their parents. As stipulated in the strategy, an intersectoral cooperation mechanism for the identification, assessment, referral, assistance and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of violence, neglect, exploitation and trafficking must be established. According to the provisions of the instruction mentioned above, educational institutions at the local level will ensure its enforcement and implement the action plan for preventing and combating school dropout and absenteeism. Administrations of educational institutions shall control and collect data, contact concerned families and determine the causes for each case of dropout or absenteeism. Based on these data, individual plans for child/family support and reintegration are to be developed.

In RM, concern over NEET youth is relatively recent despite the high rate. The NEET youth rate was for the first time included in the National Employment Strategy for 2017-2021, which represents an important action for monitoring this phenomenon. In the strategy, one of the main targets is to reduce the NEET youth rate, broken down by gender and area of residence.

Decreasing the number of NEETs is proposed as a specific target for youth within Sustainable Development Goals 2030. Thus, target 8 "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" includes two objectives: (i) by 2030 to provide decent and productive jobs for all women and men, including for young people and people with disabilities, as well as equal pay for equal work for men and women and to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on sex or other criteria, (ii) substantially reduce the proportion of youth who are not employed, educated or trained (NEET).

Even if there are no state programmes targeting NEET young people, they can be beneficiaries of programmes/services offered by the National Employment Agency of RM (NEAM). Moreover, the outreach services for targeting disadvantaged young people, including NEETs, are provided by some Youth Centres and NGOs.

### **2.1.2. Access to different tracks and levels**

In the RM, compulsory education starts with preschool education at the age of 5 or 6 years old and ends with basic education (after grade 9) at 16 years. After basic education, young people may enter the labour market (from 16 years) or they have four educational options: secondary education (with an entrance exam); vocational or professional school; trade school; specialised college. Only secondary school and college graduates holding the baccalaureate diploma are eligible for bachelor's studies in higher education institutions.

In RM the policy over the last decades was oriented toward expanding access to education, and certain achievements were registered in this field. The share of young people with tertiary education almost doubled in the last decade (NBS, 2019). These changes are largely due to the increasing number of higher education institutions, as well private HE institutions, which has increased access to higher education. However, improving education quality and efficiency continues to be a challenge (OECD, 2018). Conversely, increased access to higher education has made vocational education less attractive and a declining number of vocational students has been registered.

### **2.1.3. Policies on educational quality**

With the implementation of the reforms in education during the years 2009-2020, the emphasis has shifted to quality education and the evaluation of school outcomes. School report cards, per capita financing, strengthening baccalaureate examination transparency and other measures were implemented.

Additionally, in order to increase educational quality, the Education Code (2014) stipulates that professional development of the teaching, scientific and management staff shall be compulsory during the entire professional activity and shall be regulated by the government. Professional training courses are free of charge and carried out in the higher education institutions and/or continuing professional training institutions. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, in 2018 about 11,500 teachers and managers received free continuous training, and 420 teachers participated, for the first time, in free professional retraining courses. In addition, 23,000 teachers have benefited from internships within the curricular reform (MECR, 2019).

On the other hand, these standards and requirements currently apply only to general education and not to other levels. For instance, professional training of teachers in VET is rather sporadic and of limited relevance because of resource shortages, and there is no shared understanding of what constitutes quality in VET (ETF, 2020).

The performance of RM in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has improved since its first participation in 2010. However, the results are still below the OECD average. In reading literacy assessment (PISA, 2018), 15-year-olds in Moldova score 424 points (average 487 in OECD countries); 421 points in mathematics (average 489 in OECD countries); performance in science is 428 points (average 489 points in OECD countries).

### **2.1.4. Social support to learners**

In RM, stipends from the state budget represent a form of material support aimed at both social protection and stimulation of students (pupils) with academic performance. The stipends are granted monthly to full-time students enrolled in higher education and in specialised secondary education (colleges). The provided support includes: merit scholarships for excellent academic performance and extracurricular activity; a scholarship depending on learning outcomes; a social scholarship depending on the material situation of the student.

It is worth mentioning that social scholarship is granted, upon request, to students from socially vulnerable families, depending on income per household member. The following categories of students can apply for the social scholarship: orphans and without parental care; persons with disabilities, first and second grade; students with physical and sensory disabilities; students whose both parents are disabled or retired; students whose parents participated in military actions to defend the integrity and independence of the RM; students from families with three or more children; students with children. Moreover, educational institutions are allowed to grant social and merit scholarships, material aid, awards, unique allowances, including in exceptional cases, for medical treatment from available financial means, from the provision of paid services, and from sponsorships and donations.

Students in vocational secondary education are provided stipends according to a special regulation established by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and internal regulations of professional schools.

Students can apply for a place in the dormitories of educational institutions by submitting an application. In some cases, additional documents to attest a specific situation can be requested (orphans, parents with disabilities, families with many children, etc.). Orphans or those left without parental care can benefit from free accommodation in the dormitory for the entire duration of their studies. However, the administrations of the educational institutions decide as the last instance who and under what conditions they benefit.

**Conclusions to education.** Education policy has been focused on reforms and oriented towards expanding access to education, connecting to the new requirements and challenges. Despite some achievements, the main problems in this sector continue to persist high rate of early leavers from education, high NEET rate, low quality and mismatch between education and labour market requirements, and others. Policy measures tend to be 'inclusive' in that they try to provide skills and competencies to as many young people as possible, and then through training/vocational programs to give a second chance to low-skilled young people. At the same time, measures to reduce early school leaving are 'compensatory' and not 'preventive' since they are aimed at young people who have already left the education system.

### Mapping education policy initiatives in RM

Issue in education	Main instruments to address it	Direction
Drop-outs, NEET, low-achievement	Individual plan for child/family support and reintegration  Counselling, change in learning approach	Compensatory  ? De-commodification
Access (Roma minority)	Not addressed, only at rhetorical level	
Quality (teachers, link between education and LM)	Continuous training, mostly in general education, less in VET	



Issue in education	Main instruments to address it	Direction
Social support	social scholarship depending on the material situation of the pupil / student	? De-commodification; Stratification

  

EDUCATION	Low stratification	High stratification
High commodification		
Low commodification	X	

Source: Busemeyer, 2014 (pg.: 29-33)

## 2.2. Labour market policy for youth

In all of the country's strategic documents, youth employment is included in the policy-making process as a cross-cutting issue of major importance. The National Development Strategy – Moldova 2020, the main document that guides policy activities across the public sector in RM, stipulates as a goal the alignment of the education system to the requirements of the labour market. The National Strategy for Youth Sector Development 2020 establishes youth economic empowerment as one of its priorities. This means increasing employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for young people, as well as developing more internship and apprenticeship programmes. One of the main areas for intervention and development in the Law on Youth (2016) is “economic opportunities for young people”. According to this, the state shall stimulate the entrepreneurial initiatives of young people and promote youth employment.

Moreover, in the Law on the Promotion of Employment and Unemployment Insurance, young people aged between 16 and 24 are specified as a population group that needs additional support on the labour market. In the National Employment Strategy (2017-2021), increased attention is paid to youth employment. The emphasis is on the increasing social inclusion of all young people, facilitating the transition from school to work.

Furthermore, ODIMM – a public, non-commercial, non-profit institution, created by the government in 2007, implements a range of programs and projects targeting youth:

- ▶ National Program for Economic Empowerment of Young People (2009-2017).
- ▶ National Program “Start for young people: a sustainable business at home” (2018-2020).
- ▶ Project „Joint Opportunities in Business for Youth (JOBS for YOUTH)” (2018).
- ▶ Project “Pare 1+1”, Program to Attract Remittances in the Economy (2010 - present).
- ▶ Program “Business Incubators” (2010 - present).

However, the representativeness of youth in these programs is very low, and entrepreneurship among youth is poorly developed.

### **2.2.1. Unemployment protection (PLMP)**

In accordance with the legislation of the RM, people who are jobless and looking for a job can receive unemployment benefit if they have worked and contributed to the public social insurance system at least 12 months during the last 24 calendar months prior to the date of registration at the Employment Agency. This unemployment benefit can apply to persons who are to be laid off due to changes in the organisation, including liquidation, reorganisation or reduction of the number of staff of the institutions. The unemployment benefit is granted for a period of 5 to 9 months depending on the contribution period. The amount can be 40% or 50% of the average monthly income of the person in the last 12 months from the last 24 calendar months preceding the date of registration at the Employment Agency. However, the monthly amount of benefit may not exceed the amount of the average monthly salary for the year preceding the date of establishing the right to unemployment benefits.

Taking into account that work experience is required, a great part of young people leaving education cannot access the unemployment benefits. According to the NBS data with reference to the Sustainable Development Goals, the indicator "Proportion of unemployed people receiving unemployment benefits by sex, age groups" in 2015 showed that 1.9% of young people below the age of 24 benefited from unemployment benefits and only 1.5% in 2019.

### **2.2.2. Active labour market policy (ALMP)**

The National Employment Agency of the RM (NEAM) implements a number of active measures to increase employment opportunities, either by creating new jobs or by facilitating access to job vacancies. NEAM provides vocational training (qualification, retraining, advanced training and specialisation courses); on-the-job training; professional internships; certification of knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal and informal education. Another measure is subsidised employment – stimulating employers hiring unemployed people from vulnerable groups and partially compensating the employee's salary. NEAM stimulates labour mobility and offers grants for job creation or adaptation for people with disabilities. As well, it provides guidance, assistance and support to those starting a business, especially in the rural area.

Although the NEAM does not offer specific measures for young people, according to activity reports, about 30% of the beneficiaries of these measures are people aged 16-29 (NEAM, 2019).

### **2.2.3. Industrial and other labour relations**

In the Labour Code of the RM (2003), it is stipulated that a young specialist is a graduate of a higher, a specialised or a professional educational institution within the first three years after graduation. However, it does not contain any further provisions in regard to young specialists, but there are specific provisions related to young people under 18. According to this document, it is forbidden to employ workers under 15 years of age. A labour contract may be concluded with individuals aged at least 15 years only with the written consent of the



parents or legal representatives, and if it does not adversely affect their health, development and education. Moreover, employees under 18 year shall be hired only after undergoing a preventive medical examination, and the examination is required each year until they reach 18 years. For this category of workers, the employer shall establish reduced working norms, in accordance with the legislation in force.

According to the Code, it is forbidden to employ persons under the age of 18 if there are severe, harmful and/or dangerous working conditions for their health or moral integrity (gambling; nightclubs; production, transportation and selling of alcoholic beverages, tobacco products and toxic substances). In addition, young workers are not allowed to manually lift and transport weights that exceed the maximum norms established for them.

The distribution of working time during the week is usually uniform at 8 hours a day, for 5 days, with two days of rest. For employees up to 16 years, the daily working time may not exceed 5 hours, for employees aged 16-18 years and employees working in harmful working conditions, the daily working time may not exceed 7 hours.

The wages are set and paid according to the legislation in force, and a guaranteed minimum salary is established each year. Employees under 18 years shall be paid taking into account their reduced duration of daily work. The work of pupils and students under 18 from general secondary, vocational secondary and specialised secondary education institutions, performed outside the study time, shall be remunerated proportionally with the time worked or as stipulated in agreement.

For employees enrolled in higher or specialised higher education institutions, at the request of employer, a reduced working time is established. Moreover, these employees shall be granted additional leave while maintaining full or partial average salary and other benefits. Employees who have enrolled in education on their own shall be provided guarantees and compensations according to the provisions of their collective or individual employment contract.

**Conclusion on labour market policy.** As mentioned, in the country's strategic documents youth employment is a cross-cutting issue of major importance. Nevertheless, the report evaluations based on key labour market indicators confirm that the country still faces serious structural problems, such as informal work, low labour market participation, insufficient and inadequate quality jobs, inequalities and skills mismatches (Buciuceanu-Vrabie & Gagauz, 2017), (Crismaru, Gagauz, & Buciuceanu-Vrabie, 2018). Employment policy measures for young people are largely **'individualised'** as young people are seen as a disadvantaged group on the labour market. The actions are largely oriented towards increasing the employability of young people through counselling, professional training, etc. These are mostly **'compensatory'** and not 'preventive', as these are oriented to young people already facing disadvantages on the labour market. However, policy measures need to be more focused on promoting the growth of quality youth jobs, and macroeconomic and structural measures are required.

## Mapping youth oriented labour market policy initiatives in RM

Issue in LM	Main instruments to address it	Direction
Low PLMP coverage due to strict eligibility		Low in density and intensity; youth not targeted
ALMP	Variety of measures; youth not targeted, but still one third of beneficiaries are young people	Density high, intensity low; more compensatory
EPL and labour relations	Dis-similarity	

LABOUR MARKET	Compensatory	Preventive
Structure-related		
Individualising	X	

Source: Pohl and Walther, 2007

### 2.3. Social welfare policy

Social protection in the RM includes two components: social insurance and social assistance (social aid) that complement each other and are set to be differentiated. According to the Law on Social Protection System (1999), social insurance determines the “social protection of insured persons, consisting in payment of allowance, assistance, pensions, benefits in disease prevention and recovery of work capacity, and other benefits provided by the legislation”. Social insurance benefits are acquired as a result of compulsory insurance.

One of the main components of the national social protection system is providing allowance for families with children for both insured and uninsured categories of the population. It is worth mentioning that there is a monthly allowance for children up to 3 years in case of insured persons and 1.5/2.0 years for uninsured persons. The allowance is provided until the age of 18 only for children with disabilities. The amount of monthly allowance differs for each category of beneficiaries. In 2019, childcare and parenting monthly allowances (until the child reaches the age of 2) increased 1.5 times compared to 2015. In 2019, the average childcare and parenting monthly allowances were 91 EUR for insured persons (or 30% of the average salary) and only 33 EUR for uninsured persons.

Additionally, for each family with children a one-off childbirth allowance is provided. It increased in 2019 by more than 2.6 times compared to 2015 – from 137 EUR at the birth of the first child (at the birth of each subsequent child – 350.7 EUR) to 408 EUR.

### **2.3.1. Access and eligibility to social assistance**

Social assistance is not conditioned by work activity or social insurance payment, therefore, the financing of this form of benefit can be ensured only from the state budget or local budgets and other sources. The Law on Social Assistance (2008) regulates the legal framework on guaranteeing equal opportunities for disadvantaged families by providing social aid. Also, there was approved the Regulation on the way of establishing and paying social assistance to disadvantaged families (2008).

According to the Law, a family is disadvantaged and may receive social aid if it has a lower average monthly income than the guaranteed minimum monthly income, and if the score of welfare indicators is less or equal to that established for the welfare assessment of the family. A child is considered a person who has not reached the age of 18 years. A similar legal status have pupils/students enrolled in full time secondary or higher education until the completion of studies, but at most until reaching the age of 23 years. There are special stipulations when a child under the age of 18 can be seen as a legal subject in the sense of the present Law, referring to civil / marital status and occupational status.

In order to measure the welfare of the family, the data related to families and any movable and immovable property that the family owns/uses are taken into account. The Regulation on the way of establishing and paying social assistance contains a complete list of welfare indicators and related scoring. The social aid is determined for a period not exceeding 2 years and will be reviewed in the event of any change that could influence the right to social assistance or the amount of social assistance established. The monthly amount of social assistance shall be established as the difference between the minimum guaranteed monthly income of the family and their overall income.

Also, disadvantaged families can benefit from social assistance for the cold period of the year – that is a fixed, monthly cash payment for a period of 5 months (January-March and November-December).

### **2.3.2. Access and eligibility to social services**

According to the Law on Social Services (2010), a person/family in difficulty can benefit from social services based on an individual assessment of their needs. Any person who considers themselves at social risk or any disadvantaged, neglected or abused person/family shall initially submit an application at a social assistance unit or another provider of social services at their place of residence. If the application is accepted, the territorial social assistance unit shall ensure the provision of the necessary social services to satisfy the identified needs of the beneficiary.

In order to consolidate and diversify social services targeting children and young people at risk, "assisted social houses" were established. These institutions provide specialised social services to assist children and young people from socially vulnerable groups, children who have left the care system, other centres and residential institutions. The main aim is to ensure the socio-professional integration of these groups. According to the regulation on

the organisation and functioning of the social service “Assisted Social Housing”, this is a collaboration between central and local public authorities, NGOs, and private organisations.

With regard to social housing, there is a government decision for the approval of the regulation on the evidence, assignment and use of social housing (2017) under the Law on Housing (2015). The local public authorities (LPA) carry out the registration of persons in need of social housing. The LPA shall set up an advisory commission tasked with advising and distributing social housing. People who have reached the age of 18 years can apply for social housing. Social housing is allocated to persons or families whose monthly income per family member does not exceed the minimum subsistence level established in the country and who meet additional requirements stipulated in the regulation.

According to the government decision, social housing shall be allocated to the eligible categories in the following proportions: 10% - people with severe disabilities; 15% - families who have minors with severe disabilities in their care; 50% - young families without a home, under the Law on Youth (2016); 15% - families in which triplets, quadruplets or more children are born simultaneously; 10% - to young people without parental care until the age of 18 or until the acquisition/assignment of full exercise capacity and who have not benefited from housing from the state.

According to the decision of municipal authorities, mostly in the capital, pupils/students can buy monthly subscriptions to public transport at a lower price.

**Conclusion on social welfare policy.** Social protection in the RM do not target young people as a distinct group and neither young families in a separate compartment. It focuses mainly on measures related to social protection of families with children and maintaining the jobs of mothers and granting a childcare leave up to 3 years. The financial support of families with children is provided as one-off childbirth allowance and monthly allowances during childcare depending on the mother’s status on the labour market, income level and the age of the child.

Existing policies are mainly focused on categories of beneficiaries than on an integrated approach. At the same time, many applied measures (e.g. social assistance) are carried out after the confirmation of the poverty status rather than to prevent it on the basis of risk.

It can be concluded that these policies are mostly `familialised`. Young people are considered to be dependent on the family up to 18 years and 23 years in case they are enrolled in education.

### Mapping youth oriented social policy initiatives in RM

Issue in social sphere	Main instruments to address it	Direction
High share of young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion	Shift from social benefits to employment	
Low coverage because strict eligibility	Binding benefits assistance with obligation to work or participate in training	After 18 years, if young people are not in education (up to 23 years), they are considered as independent individuals

### Mapping youth oriented social welfare policy initiatives in RM

SOCIAL WELFARE	
Individualised	
Familialised	X

Source: Chevalier, 2016

## 2.4. Housing policy

One of the main problems among young people is the inability to purchase their own home due to a lack of financial resources. Even though it is a persistent problem, only recently has the access of young people to housing become a concern for authorities. According to the Law on Youth (2016), the state shall adopt specific measures to provide young people with housing by supporting the construction of houses for young people and young families and develop policies on purchasing dwellings aimed at young people and young families.

The state program "First home" launched in 2017 is designed to facilitate the access of the population to purchasing a home by contracting partially secured mortgage loans. One of the major objectives of this program is to discourage the emigration of young specialists abroad. Despite this program being initially designed for people aged up to 35 years, later it was extended. Now, beneficiaries of this program are persons between the ages of 18-50 years, Moldovan residents who pay taxes in the RM and meet the requirements according to program provisions. The data show that by 2019 within the "First Home" State Program 4031 applications have been registered, of which 3871 were accepted (96%). Of the 3871 beneficiaries, 2720 are families and 1151 are unmarried young people, the average age of the applicants being 31,3 years. In spite of the efforts made by the government to increase access to housing for young people through the "First House" program and other support programs, the number of young people benefitting from these programs is low, while the migration rate among them has not ceased to grow in recent years.

### 2.4.1. Access to public housing

### 2.4.2. Access to and affordability of commercial housing

#### Mapping youth-oriented housing policy initiatives in RM

HOUSING	Universal access	Selective/targeted access
High commodification		
Low commodification		?X

## 2.5. Health policy

The “National Health Policy of the Republic of Moldova” (2007-2021) is one of the main health policy documents that sets out the priorities and directions of development in health to strengthen the population’s health and reduce inequalities between different groups and regions. The health of adolescents and young people is a national priority, and access to free health services, including reproductive health, is granted to these population groups. Thus, the main provisions for the “Health of the Young Generation” in the strategy are: maintaining and strengthening the health of the young generation through the partnership between Central Public Authorities and Local Public Authorities, community, civil society and international structures; promoting health education; family planning services accessible to all; development and improvement of the network of adolescent-friendly health services and youth resource centres.

Also, the Law on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SHR) (2012) states that sexual education is compulsory, and family life education shall be carried out in educational institutions and in other institutions where adolescents or young people are, taking into account their age, gender and other particularities. Despite SRH education being compulsory, few education institutions include it in their curricula. The absence of an integrated approach to providing detailed, comprehensive SRH information in schools reduces young people’s sources of quality information (OECD, 2018).

### 2.5.1. Access to public health care

The RM introduced a mandatory system of health insurance in 2004. According to the current legislation, there are three categories of beneficiaries: employed persons, contributing through a payroll tax; self-employed or other categories of economically active population paying a flat rate contribution; and persons insured by the government, who contribute on their behalf through a budgetary transfer. Among the categories insured by the state are children up to 18 years; full-time students of secondary vocational schools, colleges and higher education institutions; postgraduate students in residence; unemployed, officially registered; disabled persons; mothers with 4 or more children; people from disadvantaged families receiving social support.



Thus, access to health care services for young people up to 18 years, young people with disabilities and those who continue their studies is guaranteed by the state. According to NBS data, the share of young people aged 18-29 years who are beneficiaries of the compulsory health insurance (population with habitual residence) constituted 61,8% in 2015, 61,2% in 2016, 62,2% in 2017 and 66,4% in 2018. Consequently, one of the main problems is the health insurance of the young NEET population, most of whom are not officially registered as unemployed at NEAM. This means that more than one third of young people not in employment, education or training are now uninsured and may face challenges in having access to medical care.

In addition, in RM there is a network of Youth Friendly Health Centres (YFHC) providing a range of services (information, counselling, integrated medical services with psychosocial assistance). Currently, 41 YFHCs are active in all districts and municipalities of the country. About 250 specialists are working in YFHCs (psychologists, social workers, gynaecologists, urologists-andrologists, dermatologists, HIV/AIDS counsellors). However, these facilities do not fully meet young people's particular needs. The access of young people from rural areas to these services is a problem, given that all YFHCs are located in urban areas and there are not enough financial and human resources to organise mobile teams in rural areas.

### **2.5.2. Public health and awareness raising**

There are several policy documents regulating the control and prevention of alcohol use, tobacco control, illicit use of drugs and other psychotropic substances. These documents include specific provisions related to adolescents and young people. In the law on the control and prevention of alcohol abuse, illicit drug use and other psychotropic substances (2001) it is specified that the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) will ensure the inclusion of courses (topics) in the curricula of preschool, school and academic institutions concerning abstinence from alcohol, illicit drug use and other psychotropic substances, to inform about the damages they cause to individual and public health. Moreover, MECR together with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection shall ensure the training of a teaching staff able to inform pupils/students on these issues.

In the Law on the manufacture and circulation of alcohol production (2000) restrictions are indicated on the retail sale of alcohol beverages in educational institutions, in student dormitories and around them, at a distance approved by the government. The sale of alcoholic beverages to persons under 18 is prohibited. Also, it is forbidden to sell alcoholic beverages in grocery stores between 22.00 and 8.00.

In order to ensure necessary conditions for the protection of public health from the consequences of the consumption of tobacco products and related products and from exposure to tobacco smoke, a Law on Tobacco Control (2007) was adopted. It is stipulated that advertising and promoting of tobacco products, related products, devices and accessories, as well as sponsorship of events and activities related to these products shall be prohibited. Health warnings shall be printed on each pack of cigarettes. It is prohibited to sell tobacco products and related products to persons under 18.

For protection against exposure to tobacco smoke and aerosol from a tobacco product or related product, smoking is prohibited in all enclosed and semi-enclosed public spaces, including public places of common use and in workplaces, regardless of the type of property and mode of access.

Moreover, a range of programs and projects financed by international organisations are implemented in RM. In 2014 following the UNFPA initiative the Y-PEER Moldova was created. It is a network of peer educators, who organise information, communication and education sessions for young people to develop knowledge, attitudes and life skills among young people for healthy and responsible behaviour. Y-PEER operates in 15 locations and includes about 300 young peer-to-peer educators. The Y-PEER curricula was approved by the MECR as an innovative educational method.

The project “Healthy Generation (Youth Friendly Health Services in Moldova)” (since 2014) is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and implemented by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection. One of the main objectives of this project is promoting safe behaviour among young people and providing health services (particularly to those vulnerable and most at risk).

### Mapping youth-oriented health policy initiatives in RM

HEALTH CARE	High (universal) access	Low (status-related; i.e. student, employee) access
High commodification		
Low commodification		X

## 2.6. Active citizenship

In the RM, youth participation and youth development have gained increasing attention within public policies. There are several policy documents targeting youth participation. The Law on Youth (2016) stipulates that the state shall ensure the participation of young people in the decision-making process by supporting the creation of youth participation structures at national and local levels and by ensuring the funding. The state shall also support and promote education for active citizenship among young people by supporting civic education initiatives, projects and programs for youth. Also, one of the main priorities of the National Strategy of the Youth Sector Development 2020 (2014) is youth participation by involving youth in the decision making process, increasing civic activism, expanding the number of local youth councils, increasing youth mobility and youth Information. Moreover, the Law on Volunteering (2010) has made a major contribution to fostering civic spirit, promoting participatory and decision-making processes among young people. In order to stimulate volunteer actions, the law provides a volunteer certificate, volunteer card, volunteer contract and letters of recommendation that confirm the volunteering activity.

### 2.6.1. Regulations of youth involvement in decision making

In order to ensure effective implementation of provisions stipulated in the policy documents on youth participation, the Framework Regulation on the organization and functioning of the local council of young people (2016) and the Framework Regulation on the organization and functioning of the Youth Centre (2017) were adopted. The main goal of a Local Youth Council (LYC) is to ensure the active participation of young people in the decision-making processes at the community/district level, planning and organising actions for youth and together with youth. LYCs are involved in the planning and budgeting process at the local level. Young people can submit recommendations on youth issues in the process of approving the local budget. According to data provided by MECR, in 2019 there were 23 district/municipal youth councils (D/MYC) and 93 LYCs, in 2018 - 22 D/MYCs and 72 LYCs, in 2016-2017 - 21 D/MYCs and 41 LYCs. In the educational institutions, there are student councils that conduct internal elections and polls within their institutions on topics of interest, so that the youth could be involved in the decision-making processes.

Youth centres (YC) are public institutions that provide development and participation services for youth throughout the country. The National Program for Development of Youth Centres (2017-2022) aims at strengthening the institutional capacities of youth structures and increasing the level of civic participation and involvement of young people in local communities. Currently in RM there are 28 YCs and most of them operates in urban areas. YCs offer programs/services in various areas of interest to young people, opportunities to participate in the decision-making process, access to information and other opportunities for personal development.

### 2.6.2. Programs on advancing youth citizenship and political participation

Many programs and projects on advancing youth citizenship and political participation are implemented with the support of international organisations. Thus, the EU project "Encouraging young people to become active citizens" launched in 2017 aims to strengthen the capacities of active youth to report social and political issues in the community, through media education and blogging. The beneficiaries of the project are youth from rural areas, as well as local media (TV, radio, print media and online).

UNICEF also supports young people in using new technologies to express their views, concerns, and interests. Thus, [U-Report](#) is a real-time social messaging tool that enables communication between young people and decision makers. It helps young people to participate in decision making and to claim their rights.

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP	
High involvement	
Low involvement	X

## Conclusion

In recent decades, the legal and conceptual framework that defines and guides youth policies in RM has changed considerably in the line with new realities and challenges. In the main legislative and normative acts „youth” is largely treated as a homogeneous group, not distinguishing specific groups by age, gender, place of residence, ethnicity, etc. Youth issues are addressed by various policies and some are part of national sectorial strategies. However, a lack of an integrated approach and a comprehensive evaluation mechanism on the implementation of youth policies is attested, including on a cross-sectoral dimension. Furthermore, the implementation and effective enforcement of legislation remains a challenge, mainly due to limited financial, logistical and human possibilities.

The policy of education has been focused on reforms and oriented towards expanding access to education, improving the quality of education, connecting to the new labour market requirements. Despite relatively large public investments in this sector, educational and training institutions still fail to cope with issues such as high number of early leavers from education and training, the mismatch between education and training outcomes and labour market requirements, high NEET rate, etc.

Employment policy are mainly focused on youth skills development and addressing individual deficiencies and less on structural policy measures in cross-sectoral areas. Young people's access to unemployment benefits is limited due to strict eligibility. Generally, unemployed young people are considered to be responsible for their situation, thus shifting the focus away from the institutional framework and socio-economic conditions in the country. Given the low wages, poor quality jobs, the mismatch between education and jobs, many young people are looking at working abroad.

Social policy is mostly familiarised, with a number of benefits for families with children, albeit insufficient. It is mainly focused on categories of beneficiaries than on an integrated approach and do not target young people and young families specifically. Many applied measures are carried out after the confirmation of the poverty status rather than to prevent it on the basis of risk. The state's policy of increasing access to housing is at an early stage and poorly developed, so it does not play a significant role in relation to the situation of young people in the country's housing market.

The health of the young generation and the development of youth friendly health services are among the priorities of the national health policy. However, the access of youth from rural areas to youth friendly health services is a problem, being amplified by the lack of financial and human resources to organize mobile teams. As well, one of the main problems is non-coverage with health insurance of young people not in education and employment, most of whom are not officially registered at Employment Agency. This means that nearly one third of young people not in employment, education or training are now uninsured and may face challenges in having access to medical care.

Analysing the national policy in terms of youth transition dimensions, it may be concluded that policy measures are 'individualised' and 'compensatory' (in terms of Pohl & Walther 2007). It can be stated that the Youth Transition Regime in RM falls under the 'transitional' category according to the classification developed by Pohl and Walther. It is characterized by an integrated education system, the predominance of general education; high rate of early school leavers; low popularity/prominence of VET; poor quality of education.

<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>Low stratification</b>	<b>High stratification</b>
High commodification		
Low commodification	X	

  

<b>LABOUR MARKET</b>	<b>Compensatory</b>	<b>Preventive</b>
Structure-related		
Individualizing	X	

  

<b>SOCIAL WELFARE</b>	
Individualised	
Familialised	X?

  

<b>HOUSING</b>	<b>Universal access</b>	<b>Selective/targeted access</b>
High commodification		X
Low commodification		

  

<b>HEALTH CARE</b>	<b>High (universal) access</b>	<b>Low (status-related; i.e. student, employee) access</b>
High commodification		
Low commodification		X

  

<b>ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP</b>	
High involvement	
Low involvement	X

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