

## Youth Partnership

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Partnership between the European Commission  
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



### CONTRIBUTION OF NON-PROGRAMME COUNTRIES TO EU YOUTH WIKI

#### CHAPTER X: REPUBLIC of MOLDOVA

#### YOUTH WORK

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## 10.1 General context

### **Historical developments**

The current phase in the development of youth work in the Republic of Moldova began after its independence in 1991.

Before the 1990s, as other Soviet republics, Moldova followed the same ideological and political youth trends: children and youth structures, mechanisms and programmes. Civic involvement and youth participation were defined and run by the Communist Party very rigidly in academic spaces (schools, colleges, universities) and social spaces (factories, collective farms, etc.). Youth organisations were defined by clear age range, type of activities, leadership and status, awards and internal procedures: Little Octobrists, Pioneers, Komsomol (Young Communists). Youth work and volunteer activities were organised within youth structures; furthermore, youth participation was mandatory for all union and republic holidays, festivals, marches and volunteer Saturdays.

The Independence events marked the early trends of youth activism. The gradual process of youth policy's integration into national legislative frameworks began after 1991. After gaining independence, Moldova entered a transition period towards developing and implementing its national youth policies and youth work frameworks. The 70 years of Soviet Union youth policy and youth work marked and influenced the initial years of youth development. Organised youth cultural and social (volunteer) activities reminded people of the Soviet era and at times produced more negative sentiments than positive.

Youth work practices were shaped by the political, socio-economic and cultural context of the newly independent Moldova. Therefore, the early 1990s were characterised by first-registered NGOs, early co-operation with Romanian and European organisations, first youth exchanges based on cultural and social projects, and first learnings about European youth structures and processes.

Even if the government had adopted some youth policy acts and papers between 1991 and 1998, the term “youth policy” was missing from the documents. State authorities began to value the role of specialists in the field of youth, sports and culture who were working with local governments and public associations in order to involve youth in different activities. Types of implemented actions were cultural and youth festivals, contests, sports competitions, and hobby and interest clubs.

After the Law on NGOs had been re-adopted, after 1998, national and local NGOs had to re-register, which caused the birth of new associations and the “death” of other organisations.

The first Law on Youth<sup>1</sup> was adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova in 1999 and defined certain terms for the first time: “youth work institution” – an organisation that unfolds activities with and for youth people; “youth social services” – special institution offering consulting services, social assistance for young people; “youth centre” – public institution for youth which provides opportunities to spend free time according to special programmes.

These definitions defined the course of youth work and youth policy developments in Moldova for the following years.

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1. <http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=311644>.

In 1999, the [National Youth Council of Moldova](#) (CNTM) was registered as the umbrella organisation for a variety of regional youth councils and national NGOs active in the field of volunteering, youth participation, youth work, ecology, health, human rights, LGBT, employment, non-discrimination, non-formal education, and youth policy. The diversity of topics and areas showed the readiness of young people to join efforts in making positive changes for themselves and the communities they lived in.

In co-operation with the Youth Department of the Republic of Moldova during 2002-2004, the National Youth Council of Moldova and national youth NGOs participated in the definition of youth policy and actions for young people included within the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and Poverty Eradication – a national action plan that included cross-sectorial youth actions for the first time.

Although youth participation was considered only within the NGO and youth centres, in 2004 the National Youth Council of Moldova joined the Civic Coalition on Free and Fair Elections which boosted the larger understanding of what youth participation is, what youth work is and where it takes place. Young people were highly involved among in this, in areas of interest such as music, theatre, travel, ecology, culture, sports; however, this grew to a larger understating and demand for various seminars and trainings for young people to become agents of change in their communities. Young people started being regarded as an active part of society – not a problem, but a solution, a resource. Also, the definition of the term and reality of a youth worker changed from an elder teacher of sports, to a younger person educated within non-formal education spirit/methods and structures.

The 2000s were defined by a rich boom in youth organisations, youth policy and youth work. Moldovan youth NGOs joined European youth programmes as the Youth Programme/Youth in Action. The National Youth Council of Moldova became a member of the European Youth Forum and furthermore attracted co-operation and membership of Moldovan NGOs into European and international NGOs. The Youth Strategy was designed with the active participation of local, regional and national NGOs and youth councils. The bi-annual Youth Forum and conferences brought together state institutions, ministerial representatives, youth NGOs, youth workers, youth researchers and young people. Young people were consulted regarding their interests and problems, as well as possible solutions they see.

The Youth Forums, the Volunteer Festival and the Volunteer Week highlighted the need for a volunteer law and furthermore, the need for validation and recognition of youth work, volunteer work, and non-formal education.

The socio-political changes of the 2010s allowed for more European youth integration: travel without a visa, larger youth participation within the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme, studies abroad and even employment outside the country. The youth exodus was heavily felt; therefore, the government ignited and ran various programmes for youth employment, youth housing, and youth entrepreneurship for those in Moldova and those who were returning home. Youth involvement in youth centres and youth organisations started at an earlier age (13-18) or, it must be said, mainly this age group remained at local and regional levels.

This period gave birth to the [Law on Volunteering](#), the Youth Centres Network, youth worker training and youth grants at national and local level. Youth structures such as the local youth councils united into the National Network of Local Youth Councils and the National Pupils' Council (council of school students), alongside with the National Youth Council and Youth Centres Network became strong and

active actors in communication, co-operation and involvement in the process of evaluation, definition and development of the youth policy in Moldova.

With the support of the United Nations Fund for Population (UNFPA) in Moldova and other donors, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, now the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, uses the basis for implementation of the Law on Youth and support to the youth sector the positive experience of the existing legislative framework in the field of youth, not only of the EU member states (e.g. Romania, Lithuania, Estonia, etc.), but also those in the Commonwealth of Independent States (Belarus, Russian Federation). The monitoring of youth policies in the Republic of Moldova, carried out during 2008 by the Council of Europe, fostered the formulation of recommendations in the report on Youth Policy in the Republic of Moldova, which was taken into account by the working group responsible for co-ordinating the process of drafting the Law on Youth.

Introducing and applying in practice the co-management principle (parity) was a current necessity and tendency in the process of developing, implementing and evaluating youth policies. This principle implies the equal representation of public authorities and youth associations in different joint bodies of activity (councils, committees, commissions, working groups, etc.), whereby both governmental and non-governmental institutions assume responsibility and authority to manage the existing resources in the youth field. An example in this respect is the Governmental Commission for Youth Policy, as well as the replication of this commission at the district level.

At present, with youth (aged 14-35) accounting for one-third of its population, Moldova has a unique socio-economic development opportunity. However, Moldovan youth continue to face multiple and interconnected challenges. According to the Youth Multi-dimensional Deprivation Indicator (Y-MDI), developed by the EU-OECD Youth Inclusion project, one in three young Moldovans face difficulties in multiple dimensions of well-being, in particular in employment, civic participation and, to a lesser degree, health.

### **National definition or understanding of Youth Work**

A new [Law on Youth](#)<sup>2</sup> was adopted in July 2016, which redefines the youth age range as 14-35 years old, contains new concepts and definitions of youth work, youth workers, non-formal education, youth organisation, youth centre, youth council, as well as new principles: co-management (parity); subsidiarity, inter-sectoral co-operation, etc.

As defined by the Law on Youth, *youth activity (youth work)* is any action with and for young people, of a social, educational or civic nature, that is based on non-formal learning processes and of voluntary participation of young people, co-ordinated by a youth worker or a youth specialist.

A *youth worker* is a person who, through youth activity, offers support to young people in personal, social and education development, in order to ensure their better integration into society.

A youth worker is a person who carries out various activities with young people from the community or with groups of young people without necessarily following a planned or systematic activity. A youth

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2. <http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=365506>.

worker may be a youth leader, a volunteer, or a person within a youth organisation or any other organisation.

A *youth specialist* (in youth work) is a person who has received special training in the field of youth work and who provides professional services to young persons.

A youth specialist implements a planned, systematic and professional activity in relation to young people or a group of young people and acts within an institutions providing services for young people.

Similarly, youth work (activity for youth) is a defining element of youth policies/youth work and the field that contributes to the multilateral formation and development of young people. It is based on non-formal learning processes and on the voluntary participation of young people. Youth work carried out at a professional level by a youth specialist within an institution working with young people is called youth services.

## 10.2 Administration and governance of youth work

### **Governance**

As defined by Article 9 of the [Law on Youth](#), the main actor and overall co-ordinator of the youth policy and youth work in Moldova is the *Ministry of Education, Culture and Research*.

Article 10 defines the National Agency for Programme Development and Youth Work as an administrative authority under the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research established for the purpose of training and continuous improvement of youth workers, programmes, activities and services, as well as for their implementation, accreditation, monitoring and evaluation.

Symbolically, the National Agency for Programme Development and Youth Work was established through Decision No. 598<sup>3</sup> on 12 August 2020. According to the [decision](#), in the following six months the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research will transfer programme and financial functions and competences to the agency. This event marks a positive act of youth work development at national level.

In addition, the current necessity and tendency in the process of development, implementation and evaluation of youth policies is the co-management principle (parity). This principle implies the equal representation of public authorities and youth associations in different joint bodies of activity (councils, committees, commissions, working groups, etc.), whereby both governmental and non-governmental institutions assume responsibility and authority to manage existing resources in the youth field. Article 11 stipulates these to be implemented at national and local level.

At local level, youth policy development relies on support from the local public administrations (Article 12) in the implementation of national policies and supporting youth NGOs, youth centres, youth initiatives, etc. Furthermore, local public administrations are encouraged to carry out their own programmes to support young people in the community, to ensure financial means, to be open to young people's initiatives and to involve them in decision-making processes.

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3. [www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=122776&lang=ro](http://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=122776&lang=ro).

The Law on Youth also stipulates that youth centres are a viable tool for realising youth programmes and services at local level (Article 13). These institutions will operate on the basis of a regulations framework and will meet the quality standards for the services provided. It is worth specifying that youth centres provide information, guidance, counselling, education, organisation and leisure-time activities for young people, contributing to the preparation of youth social and professional integration.

### **Cross-sectoral co-operation**

During the first month of National Strategy of Youth Sector Development 2020<sup>4</sup> implementation in 2015, at the initiative of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, a reference group with a monitoring role was created. The role of the reference group is to provide monitoring of the strategy implementation process, ongoing evaluation of the implementation, accomplishment of advocacy activity and of dialogue with the partners responsible for the implementation of those four priorities, as well as of energising the implementation process and obtaining the expected results. The Reference Group convenes once or twice a year and brings together representatives of different ministries, youth NGOs, youth councils (national and local), youth centres and youth workers.

National Youth Capital represents a great inter-sectoral tool of co-operation for local public authority, regional and national NGOs, international NGOs, as well as central public authorities represented by different ministries. From the decision taken based on an application form, to the implementation that brings together the national and local authorities, youth NGOs and youth centres, it is an exercise of common co-operation and vision.

The elaboration, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the National Strategy of Youth Sector Development is yet another cross-sectoral co-operation between all actors involved in youth policy and youth work in Moldova.

## **10.3 Support for youth work**

### **Policy/legal framework**

Youth policy in Moldova is recognised as an important part of the government development agenda and vision.

The main acts defining youth policy and youth work in Moldova are the [Law on Youth](#) and the [National Strategy of Youth Sector Development 2020](#).

The main support in development of youth work consists of the following:

- developing the mechanisms of the financial support (developing and promoting youth work, youth sector funding, developing and assessing youth work indicators, maintenance of youth centres, etc.);

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4. [lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=356215](http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=356215).

- elaborating programmes which sustain youth work implementation (annual grants programme, national youth capital, national support programme for strengthening and development of the local/regional youth councils, Youth Centres Development Programme 2022, development of the volunteering programme);
- creating the methodological framework of the quality of the youth work;
- building and developing the infrastructure (institutions, youth workers, youth centres, youth organisations, youth leaders, etc.) including empowering the local public administration (infrastructure, system of youth policy and assurance of the quality of youth work).

In the case of youth centres, a conceptual document, Programme Portfolio for Youth Centres, was drawn up by the ministry in 2019. The document provides a general framework and innovative ideas, tools, models, methods and criteria for future youth work carried out by youth centres.

### **Funding**

Financial support for youth work comes from three main sources: state budgets, local government budgets and international donors. This is accomplished through state youth programmes covering youth policy and youth work.

The state budget for youth affairs is approximately 20 million Moldovan lei (MDL) (i.e. €1 million) per year and has not changed since 2018. However, this amount does not include programmes for youth that are implemented by ministries or related agencies other than the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research. The total budget allocated by second-level local public authorities (LPAs) amounted to approx. €600 000 in 2017, representing a slight increase over the 2016 level (+5%). In 2018, the budget allocation by second-level LPAs was approx. €1.5 million. The increase is related to the launch in 2017 of the National Programme for Youth Centre Development 2022; the youth centres were established by the LPA (22 regional youth centres and 22 branches at rural level in 2020). The total amount allocated towards the annual grant programme for supporting and developing the youth NGO sector, financed from the state budget, is about MDL 7 million (approx. €360 000).

An important achievement in the area of youth services and youth work development in Moldova is the National Youth Centre Development Programme 2017-2022. In this regard, the partnership between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and UNFPA Moldova was established by signing the agreement for the Joint Fund<sup>5</sup> for Development of Youth Centres, including for vulnerable young people. The programme is implemented in the territorial-administrative units of the Republic of Moldova, where second-level LPAs undertake to develop and expand the territorial coverage of youth services. As of 2019, other partners joined the Joint Fund, including the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation and the Council of Europe, with the objective of developing a civic and volunteering spirit among youth and to build the School Youth Centre Partnership.

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5. Joint Fund for the Development of Youth Centres and Strengthening the Participation and Civic Involvement of Young People in the Republic of Moldova of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation and the United Nations Population Fund.



Programme components:

- component I: professional development of human resources in youth centres;
- component II: support for the development of the technical and material basis of youth centres;
- component III: support for the development of the district/municipal grant programme to fund youth initiatives/youth projects.

### **Co-operation**

The Youth Capital experience is a great model for co-operation between state, local public administration (LPA), youth NGOs and youth centres. The annual implementation allows for a common action based on a common vision and financial efforts.

The annual grants programme calls for co-operation between youth NGOs and between youth NGOs and public administration. The reason behind it is not only uniting the efforts, but with a learning and educational purpose especially towards the local public administration and local level actors (youth centres, youth specialists, schools, etc.).

The National Programme for Youth Centre Development 2022 has provided a large space for learning and action between youth centres and national NGOs, local schools and local actors.

The Joint Fund for the Development of Youth Centres and Strengthening the Participation and Civic Involvement of Young People in the Republic of Moldova was created with the common effort, funds and co-ordination of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation and the United Nations Population Fund. The Joint Fund allows for the youth centres to receive training and guidance, financial support for running a variety of activities such as outreach youth work, promoting volunteering, youth services and counselling, youth participation etc.

## **10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work**

### **Quality assurance**

The Youth work quality assurance framework is under development in the Republic of Moldova.

The [Law on Youth](#) defines the youth work specialist (professional) as one that can provide youth services. It also specifies that a youth work specialist is a person who has received special training in the field of youth work and who offers professional services to young people.

There is no vocational training for youth workers in the formal educational system. The master's degree offered by the Moldova State University and the Ion Creangă State Pedagogical University are Training/Formation for trainers and animators working with children and youth.

Youth specialists working in youth centres or public administrations are recruited through providing a higher education qualification in education or social areas, experience in working with young people and competences relevant to their job description.

The Law on Youth also defines youth workers acting on a voluntary basis, who may be youth leaders, representatives of a youth organisation, etc. These receive training and gain experience within youth non-formal activities at national and international level.

The [“MilleniuM” Training and Development Institute](#) NGO provides training for trainers, annual programme for youth workers and youth specialists.<sup>6</sup> The training programme is supported financially by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research through the annual grant programme.

In the case of youth centres, a conceptual document, Programme Portfolio for Youth Centres, was drawn up by the ministry in 2019. The document provides a general framework and innovative ideas, tools, models, methods and criteria for future youth work carried out by youth centres.

Training and support for youth specialists and youth workers from youth centres is provided from the Joint Fund. The Joint Fund allows for Youth Centres to receive training and guidance, financial support for running a variety of activities such as outreach youth work, promoting volunteering, youth services and counselling, youth participation etc. The fund also provides support for youth workers to learn, exchange best practices, and develop their professional skills and competences.

The to-be-created National Agency for Programmes Development and Youth Work as stipulated in the Law on Youth Article 10 will be the administrative authority under the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research established for the purpose of training and continuous improvement of youth workers, programmes, activities and services, as well as for their implementation, accreditation, monitoring and evaluation.

The role and main responsibilities of the agency are:

- to co-ordinate the implementation of the current programmes in the youth sector that develop youth work;
- to develop and implement national monitoring mechanisms and ensure quality of youth work/services;
- development and training of human resources (in the youth field);
- development of various thematic studies, research and analysis in the youth field.

### **Research and evidence supporting youth work**

The evidence base for youth policy mostly comes from civil society actors benefiting from the financial support of international organisations (UN agencies, OECD, etc.) These researches reflect various areas aimed at young people, youth policy and youth work. Although lacking national studies, the following researches prove a healthy co-operation between state and international bodies with the national organisations within the process of finding youth evidence, as well as using it in the further development of youth policy and youth work.

The [Youth Index 2015 Republic of Moldova](#)<sup>7</sup> was prepared by the National Youth Council of Moldova (CNTM) in the framework of its strategic objectives outlined for the 2014-2018 timeframe. The research

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6. <http://millenium.md/formare-de-formatori/>.

7. [https://moldova.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Policy%20brief\\_Youth%20Index\\_%20En.pdf](https://moldova.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Policy%20brief_Youth%20Index_%20En.pdf).

aims to consider and assess the situation of youth in the light of certain indicators of the Youth Index, and determine the youth vulnerability area along with their disparities, having come up with a set of appropriate measures to address/overcome such issues.

[Youth Index. Methodology for quantifying inequalities between young people and adults](#)<sup>8</sup> is aimed at developing a composite index of inequalities, which would quantify the gaps between young and mature people. The final values of the Youth Index show that the gaps between young people and adults are quite large, although they have narrowed in recent years. The well-being of young people and their successful integration into socio-economic processes is conditioned by the existence of public policies focused on the needs of this population group. The Youth Index promotes youth policies that are evidence-based and contain well-formulated goals that must be achieved, including those that transpose the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The [Youth Well-being Policy Review of Moldova](#)<sup>9</sup> 2018 assesses the situation of youth in Moldova with regard to employment, education, health and civic participation. This multi-dimensional approach allows us to capture the diverse facets of youth livelihoods. The review includes: a) a full diagnosis on the situation of youth in Moldova using a well-being lens; b) an inventory of key youth policies and a description of the institutional framework for youth development; c) an analysis of gender social norms and health disparities among youth.

The [Institutional capacities of Youth Centres from Moldova](#)<sup>10</sup> represents an initial evaluation report of 2018. It was developed in the context of the Development Programme of Youth Centres for the years 2017-2022, implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECC) and the UNFPA in Moldova which aims to strengthen the institutional capacities of youth centres for the development and territorial expansion of youth services.

As a result of the evaluation, it was possible to certify the conditions of the following aspects, but also the identification of the interventions necessary for improvement:

- organisation and operation of youth centres and of their subsidiaries;
- correspondence of the activities of the youth centres with the objectives and tasks set by the regulatory framework in force;
- human resources management, public image and interaction of youth centres with local public authorities, civil society organisations, other youth structures;
- infrastructure and endowments of the youth centres;
- identifying the areas of institutional development adequate to stimulate progress and positive results in the activity of youth centres;

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8. "Youth Index. Methodology for quantifying inequalities between young people and adults", developed by the Independent Analytical Centre "Expert-Grup" within the Joint Fund on development of Youth Centres and strengthening the participation and civic involvement of young people in the Republic of Moldova of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation and the United Nations Fund for Population, August 2020.

9. OECD Development Centre (2018), "Youth Well-being Policy Review of Moldova", EU-OECD Youth Inclusion Project, Paris.

10. <https://moldova.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Capacitatile%20institucionale%20ale%20centrelor%20de%20tineret%20din%20Moldova.pdf>.

- identifying the needs and interests of young beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of the centres of youth;
- formulation of relevant recommendations for strengthening the institutional capacities of youth centres;
- establishing directions and priorities regarding the institutional development of youth centres.

The voluntary national evaluation on implementation of [the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)<sup>11</sup> reports on the situation of young people in Moldova and their interaction with the SDGs. The report was made in the framework of the National Campaign “Youth in Moldova for #GlobalObjectives” implemented by the National Youth Council of Moldova, in partnership with the UNFPA, the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation and UNICEF, with media support provided by the Youth Media Centre.

The Comprehensive Youth Sector Analysis<sup>12</sup> is intended for decision makers, specialists in ministries concerned with the development and monitoring of youth policies, non-governmental organisations involved in working with and for youth, youth specialists and youth workers, teachers, and other social actors concerned with the subject of youth and youth sector policies.

### **Participative youth work**

The National Strategy of Youth Sector Development 2020 aims to develop and strengthen the youth sector by contributing to the creation of an adequate environment to ensure the evolution of every young person, including those who have fewer opportunities. Its main objectives are to encourage the participation of young people, to provide quality youth services, to ensure economic opportunities for young people and to strengthen the youth sector.

The Youth Strategy 2014-20 places significant emphasis on the development of support systems for young people, including through youth centres or youth-friendly health centres (Moldova Government 2014) and on strengthening the youth sector through consolidation and inter-ministerial co-operation. Youth centres provide a variety of services (programmes) to target youth groups. With the involvement of young people, these centres carry out educational and methodical activities; cultural activities and services, including training and access to information; civic participation with a focus on decision-making processes, human rights advocacy and social reintegration; skills training and professional integration; entrepreneurship development; volunteering; promotion of a healthy lifestyle; leisure time; outreach/mobile youth work, etc.

The Law on Youth makes a clear distinction between the notions of “youth worker” (on a voluntary basis) and “youth work specialist” (professional, employee). This distinction gives independence to youth workers in the NGO field, and creates commitments towards the youth specialists. However,

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11.

[https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/raportul\\_alternativ\\_al\\_tinerilor\\_cu\\_privire\\_la\\_implementarea\\_odd\\_r\\_o.pdf](https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/raportul_alternativ_al_tinerilor_cu_privire_la_implementarea_odd_r_o.pdf).

12. ISBN978-9975-3378-6-1. 061.213(478) C63 Comprehensive Youth Sector Analysis, National Institute for Economic Research, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), INCE, Chişinău, 2020.

recognition of youth work and validation of non-formal education is still under discussion and development.

The existing mechanisms of National Reference Group, the Government Commission for Youth Policies, annual National Youth Conference, etc. create space for youth consultation and contribution to the development and implementation of youth policy and youth work in Moldova.

Although there is no official exact data of the number of active youth organisations, Moldova has a rich variety of youth structures: [National Youth Council of Moldova \(CNTM\)](#) – an umbrella structure of 61 youth organisations, National Network of Local Youth Councils, youth NGOs and NGOs working with young people, student and pupil councils.

### **“Smart” youth work: youth work in the digital world**

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, digital youth work was not that present and it was mostly encouraged by the NGO sector as part of various projects. The digital tools in use were part of promoting interactive youth participation (e.g. online quizzes, consultation forums, digital storytelling, etc.) or as communication and preparation work within international projects (e.g. Zoom, trello.com, menti.com, etc.).

COVID-19 forced the youth sector to diversify and develop creativity in ensuring participation, training and inclusion. Youth organisations were more mobile and open in accessing and using online tools in order to enable youth participation in projects, training and speaking programmes. Spring and summer 2020 were characterised by a boom in videos, webinars and online training available for young people.

Furthermore, the youth centres and youth NGOs, as well as the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research became even more visible on online platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, etc. Online youth activities have also created more space for participation regardless of geographical or social distances.

The Joint Fund provided training for the youth workers and youth specialists from the youth centres in using online tools to continue working with young people, as well as supported youth workers and youth specialists to capacitate on their competencies.

Although tiring at times due to its intensity, or not available to all young people due to lack of smart technology or internet connection, “smart” digital youth work has enabled youth participation during the COVID-19 pandemic and has given the opportunity to diversify youth work methods, adding creativity and innovation.

An innovative portion of youth and youth workers’ involvement in youth work has been the Online Digital Badges launch in Moldova in 2020. The mobile [Badge Wallet](#)<sup>13</sup> app has replaced paper diplomas and certificates with an interactive youth-friendly validation of participation. The app is promoted by the [“MilleniuM” Training and Development Institute](#) and [Creative Development Association](#), and supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and UNFPA through the Joint Fund and annual grant programme supporting various youth and volunteering grants.

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13. [www.badgewallet.eu/en/](http://www.badgewallet.eu/en/).

## 10.5 Youth workers

### **Status in national legislation**

The [Law on Youth](#) makes a clear distinction between the notions of “youth worker” (on a voluntary basis) and “youth work specialist” (professional, employee). The Law on Youth<sup>14</sup> defines the *youth specialist (in youth work)* as a “person who has received a special training in the field of youth work and who provides professional services to young persons”. The youth specialist is based on training in the field of youth work and acts within an institution providing services for young people.

Since at the moment there is no formal education for youth workers/youth specialists in Moldova, youth specialists working in youth centres or public administrations are recruited through providing a qualification of higher education in education or social areas, experience in working with young people and competences relevant to their job description. This creates differences in payments/salaries that vary from region to region based on the qualifications, status and recruitment position offered by LPAs.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research has made efforts for years to include the *youth worker specialist* within the Order/Decision No. 22 of 3 March 2014 regarding the Occupation Classifier from the Republic of Moldova (CORM 006-14)<sup>15</sup> which fits youth specialists within Group 2359 – Education specialists not classified in the previous basic groups (not as academic etc.).

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research has advanced the request and necessary documents to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection to include the “youth worker specialist” function in the Occupations classifier of the Republic of Moldova. Although the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection has accepted the proposal, a final decision has not yet been issued.

### **Education, training and skills recognition**

There is no vocational training for youth workers in the formal educational system. The Master’s degree offered by the Moldova State University and the Ion Creangă State Pedagogical University are Training/Formation for trainers and animators for children and youth.

Youth specialists working in youth centres or public administrations are recruited through providing a higher education qualification in education or social areas, experience in working with young people and competences relevant to their job description.

The Law on Youth also defines youth workers acting on a voluntary basis, who may be youth leaders, representatives of a youth organisation, etc. These receive training and gain experience within youth non-formal activities at national and international level.

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14. Law on Youth <http://lex.justice.md/md/366763/>.

15. [www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=70710&lang=ro](http://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=70710&lang=ro).

The “MilleniuM” Training and Development Institute NGO provides the Training for trainers annual programme for youth workers and youth specialists. The training programme is supported financially by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research through the annual grant programme.

In the case of youth centres, a conceptual document, Programme Portfolio for Youth Centres, was drawn up by the ministry in 2019. The document provides a general framework and innovative ideas, tools, models, methods and criteria for future youth work carried out by youth centres.

There is no training offered by the local public authorities; moreover, in some cases the local authorities do not align or understand the non-formal approach.

Training and support for youth specialists and youth workers from youth centres is provided within the Joint Fund. The Joint Fund allows youth centres to receive training and guidance, financial support for running a variety of activities such as outreach youth work, promoting volunteering, youth services and counselling, youth participation etc. The fund also provides support for youth workers to learn, exchange best practices, and develop their professional skills and competences (e.g. training for strengthening intercultural skills, for addressing specific youth health issues, on anti-discrimination and human rights).

The draft act on “The Functions of the Youth Worker”, initiated by the Joint Fund for the Development of Youth Centres and Strengthening the Participation and Civic Involvement of Young People in the Republic of Moldova is based on the [European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers](#) as well as [A Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally](#).

Since the youth specialists are recruited by LPA, the evaluation or validation of their work is carried out by people that lack knowledge in the youth, youth work and non-formal education fields. In most of the cases, this depends on the local political situation and personal relations.

### **Mobility of youth workers**

Although there is no direct programme of youth worker mobility in the country, due to the intense co-operation between youth centres within the Joint Fund, some youth centres organise visits and exchange of best practices themselves. Although their occurrence is rare, these visits reinforce the need for mutual support and learning between youth workers and youth specialists.

Youth workers from the NGOs are very mobile and participate at diverse seminars, training courses and mobilities at national and international level.

The youth specialists from the LPA and youth centres are keener in participating in trainings and seminars at the national level due to language barriers of traveling elsewhere, and, due to lack of understanding and permission from the LPA authorities themselves. Participation in international or national long-term training courses requires special permission at times not valued by the LPA – they are not considered as capacitating the youth worker, but missing work. While any training is a continuous learning and development for youth specialists, some of them, due to the low salaries, see these trainings as an opportunity for validation and career development (position or salary).

## 10.6 Recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work

### **Existing arrangements**

The *youth specialist* is included within the Order/Decision No. 22 of 3 March 2014 regarding the Occupation Classifier from the Republic of Moldova (CORM 006-14)<sup>16</sup> under Group 2359 – Education specialists not classified in the previous basic groups (not as academic etc.).

Youth specialists working in youth centres or public administration are recruited through providing a qualification of higher education in education or social areas, experience in working with young people and competences relevant to their job description.

Forms of knowledge acquired and recognition of learning outcomes such as certificates or diplomas seem to have great importance for youth specialists and youth workers, especially if approved or recognised by their supervisors or public authorities. However, local or state authorities only take into consideration stamped hard copies. Youth specialists receive certificates and diplomas for participation, therefore, these serving as validation of their knowledge and involvement.

### **Skills**

Youth specialists working in youth centres or public administration are recruited through providing a higher education qualification in education or social areas, experience in working with young people and competences relevant to their job description.

The main functions that define the competences and skills of youth workers and youth specialists are as follows:

- youth counselling;
- planning youth work and youth activities;
- ensuring youth training and learning;
- co-ordinating teamwork;
- conflict management between young people and adults;
- promoting youth participation and community life of the young people;
- attracting and managing resources for youth work and youth activities;
- monitoring and evaluation of youth work.

## 10.7 Raising awareness about youth work

### **Information providers**

Within the funds of the Joint Fund, the Youth Centres Network has developed a common graphic identity, online communication and promotional pages on Instagram, Facebook, youth outreach activities and volunteer teams. Especially since the start of the pandemic, the youth centres and the

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16. [www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=70710&lang=ro](http://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=70710&lang=ro).



Ministry of Education, Culture and Research have been very actively promoting their work for young people and those working with them – youth workers, youth specialists, teachers, psychologists, etc.

It has become an even more important task for the youth media to provide information and support to young people. Although too intense at times, online information was very extensive and available for young people and youth workers.

However, the abundance of informational flow makes it hard for youth workers and youth specialists to follow other research, information and events.

Youth work is valued and supported by the governmental bodies; however, the local public administrations are falling behind. The political situation and COVID-19 resulted in the loss of most of the public informational spaces. Young people are treated as followers and “participants” in youth work activities, and only those involved in structures such as youth councils are involved in the direct consultation, development and evaluation of youth policy and youth work.

### **Key initiatives**

The pandemic and the recent presidential elections have called and enabled more attention to young people. A number of large-scale campaigns such as “I choose to feel GOOD with others and with myself” and “I choose to feel good” have been launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova in partnership with UNFPA Moldova as part of the response to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Youth policy and youth work have been highlighted through national events such as the annual National Youth Conference during the youth week each year in November, Youth Consultations on 8 August every year, the National Week of Volunteering and the Volunteering Festival, etc. These events, face-to-face or online, bring together youth work actors to exchange information and best practices, and to share solutions and proposals for national and local youth actions.

## **10.8 Current debates and reforms**

### **Forthcoming policy developments**

Positive trends in youth work developments in Moldova are openness for synchronisation and harmonisation of youth policy with European standards and practices.

The status of *youth specialist* within the Occupation Classifier of the Republic of Moldova is still under discussion currently.

The National Strategy of Youth Sector Development 2020 has been evaluated and discussed within diverse working groups with the participation of young people, youth workers and youth specialists. The new Youth Strategy is being developed.

The recognition of the role and importance of youth workers and youth specialists is being discussed and mechanisms are to be identified and validated.

Professional curriculum for a vocational training and a university degree for youth specialists are being under discussion with the universities.

### **Ongoing debates**

The importance of youth work and youth work as a profession in Moldova is not in question. Young people are a priority and those working and guiding young people are an important element of the whole puzzle.

Therefore, the above-mentioned reforms and forthcoming policy developments would ensure continuous youth work development.

Areas for further development include the absence of educational and occupational standards for youth workers, the absence of a youth work quality assurance framework and the lack of an institution in charge of youth work implementation and development.