

Youth Partnership

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CHAPTER V: MOLDOVA PARTICIPATION

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the organisations co-operating with them.

5.1. GENERAL CONTEXT

Main concepts

On 1 January 2022, 2.6 million people lived in the Republic of Moldova (excluding the Transnistrian region), of which 670 900 or 25.8% were young people aged 14-34 years (women – 49.3%; men – 50.7%).¹

The proportion of youth to other age groups of the population is in continuous decline, with the number of young people in the Republic of Moldova decreasing by 150 000 in the period 2017-2020.²

In recent years, the population of Moldova has declined due to migration, especially among young people. This has had a particularly significant impact on rural communities, where many young people have left for the cities or even moved abroad. This trend has had a negative effect on the participation of young people in local decision-making processes.

In the Republic of Moldova, there are several normative acts and policies targeting youth participation and shaping its concept. The concept of youth participation is regulated by the Law on Youth,³ the Education Code of the Republic of Moldova,⁴ the EU-Moldova Association Agreement,⁵ the National Strategy of Youth Sector Development 2020 (as of December 2022 the new National Strategy of Youth Sector Development 2030 is in the development process),⁶ the Education Development Strategy for 2014-2020 “Education – 2020” (the new Education Development Strategy for 2022-2030 “Education – 2030” is in the final stage of public consultations as of late 2022),⁷ and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the Republic of Moldova.

Despite efforts to create a supportive environment for youth participation, the government has struggled to effectively implement this principle in practice. Although it is widely accepted that

¹. Data on young people in the Republic of Moldova in 2021 is available at <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=7504>, accessed 17 August 2022.

². Young people’s participation in voting: between erroneous interpretations and innovative approaches. Comment by Mihaela Fedoseev and Mihai Mogîldea, <https://ipre.md/2021/10/15/participarea-tinerilor-la-vot-intre-interpretari-eronate-si-abordari-inovative-comentariu-de-mihaela-fedoseev-si-mihai-mogildea/>, accessed 17 August 2022.

³. Law on Youth No. 215 of 29 July 2016, available at www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=105800&lang=ro, accessed 10 August 2022.

⁴. Educational Code of the Republic of Moldova No. 152 of 17 July 2014, available at www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=112538&lang=ro, accessed 22 August 2022.

⁵. EU-Moldova Association Agreement, available at www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=83489&lang=ro, accessed 10 August 2022.

⁶. National Strategy of Youth Sector Development 2020 approved by the Government Decision No. 1006 of 10 December 2014, available at www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=49195&lang=ro, accessed 10 August 2022.

⁷. Education Development Strategy for 2022-2030 “Education – 2030”, available at https://ipp.md/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Strategia_Versiunea_03_2022-02-08.pdf, accessed 10 August 2022.

young people have the right to participate in decisions that affect them, there are still numerous obstacles in Moldova that prevent this from happening. These barriers include a lack of skills and experience among youth on how to participate, as well as a lack of trust from decision makers towards youth and their initiatives.⁸

The low level of youth involvement in decision-making processes, both at the local and national levels, supports also the notion that youth representative organisations, particularly at the local level, are unable to effectively enable youth to participate in these processes. This is due to a lack of communication between the youth sector and public administration and overall a lack of advocacy capacity for youth. As a result, the youth sector at the local level often faces low budgets and tokenistic attempts at youth participation.⁹

Analysed through the framework of principles for effective and ethical participation designed by UNICEF,¹⁰ the situation of youth participation in Moldova could be summarised as follows:

⁸. Survey on the participation of adolescents and young people and their vision on the National Strategy “Moldova 2030”, available at <https://moldova.ureport.in/poll/991/>, accessed 10 August 2022.

⁹. Ibid.

¹⁰. Every Child’s Right to be heard, A resource guide on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 12 Gerison Lansdown (2011), published by Save the Children UK on behalf of Save the Children and UNICEF, London, available at www.unicef.org/adolescence/files/Every_Childs_Right_to_be_Heard.pdf, accessed 10 August 2022.

Transparent and informative	<p>Access to public information in Moldova, particularly at the local level, is limited. Town halls often do not have websites or other platforms where citizens can access drafts of decisions or participate in consultations. Information about local authorities' decisions and agendas may be found on town hall information panels or Facebook pages, but these sources are typically updated after decisions have been made. One option for staying informed about the activities of public authorities is to attend local council meetings, but these do not provide in-depth information about project proposals subject to decision.</p> <p>At the regional level, some district councils have websites that offer transparency in the decision-making process by publishing drafts of decisions and allowing for public consultation, while others only provide announcements about local public policies without specific details. At the national level, the procedure for consultation on draft laws and government decisions is generally followed, with drafts available on a special portal called particip.gov.md. However, this platform is not accessible to youth with visual or mental disabilities.</p> <p>Despite the implementation of the Law on Transparency in the Decision-Making Process in 2008 and progress made at the national level, many young people in rural Moldova still struggle to access information and lack the necessary tools for effective participation. A study conducted in 2019 found that 38% of young people do not participate in the decision-making process due to a lack of information relevant to them.¹¹</p>
Voluntary	A majority of youth participation activities are organised on a voluntary basis, sometimes with elements of tokenism, where young people are involved in activities with no clear understanding of the purpose and their role in it.
Respectful	Young people's opinions are sometimes treated with less respect by decision makers.

¹¹. The study “UNEQUAL MOLDOVA, Analysis of the most relevant inequalities in the Republic of Moldova”, available at <https://cntm.md/resurse-de-specialitate/unequal-moldova-analysis-of-the-most-relevant-inequalities-in-the-republic-of-moldova/>, accessed 15 December 2022.

Relevant/ meaningful participation	<p>In the decision-making process, youth are often not given the opportunity to voice their opinions on matters that directly impact their lives at the beginning of the consultation process, which is a crucial stage in determining the concept of a law. Instead, they are only involved at the final stage, and even then, their recommendations are often disregarded by decision makers who provide various reasons for not taking them into consideration.</p> <p>According to a U-Report survey conducted by UNICEF in January 2022, 44% of the 710 young people surveyed said that national and local authorities never consider their opinions, while 52% said that their opinions are not taken seriously.¹²</p> <p>Also, according to the Barometer of Public Opinion,¹³ over 46% of respondents do not believe in the political parties or their leaders.</p>
Facilitated with child/youth- friendly environment and working methods	<p>Usually, young people are not adequately prepared and do not have the confidence and opportunity to contribute their views to the draft of decisions and laws because they do not understand the legal terminology and are not familiar with the mechanisms.</p> <p>According to the “Unequal Moldova” study,¹⁴ 13.4% of respondents say they do not participate in the decision-making process because they don’t feel prepared and they think only specialists should take part in such processes.</p> <p>Another challenge is the lack of physical spaces, especially in rural areas, where young people can gather.</p>
Inclusive	<p>Infrastructure in Moldova is inaccessible to people with disabilities, significantly hindering their participation. Roma people also face barriers in the process of participation as a result of stereotypes. Most NEET young people are not involved in the participatory processes.</p>
Supported by training	<p>Public administration and civil society benefit from capacity-building programmes on youth participation, developing skills and support to facilitate youth participation effectively. However, a high turnover of staff results in loss of knowledge and institutional memory. There is no academic programme offering formal education of youth workers.</p>
Safe and sensitive	<p>In Moldova, many civil society organisations continue to report harassment.¹⁵ Some</p>

¹². U-Report, Barometer of youth participation 2022, available at <https://moldova.ureport.in/opinion/2654/>, accessed 10 August 2022.

¹³. Barometer of Public Opinion, Republic of Moldova, June 2021, available at <http://bop.ipp.md/>, accessed 10 August 2022.

¹⁴. The study “UNEQUAL MOLDOVA, Analysis of the most relevant inequalities in the Republic of Moldova”, available at <https://cntm.md/resurse-de-specialitate/unequal-moldova-analysis-of-the-most-relevant-inequalities-in-the-republic-of-moldova/>, accessed 15 December 2022.

¹⁵. EaP CSF Presents Civil Society Perspective on Policy Developments and Further Co-operation Post-2020 delivery, available at <https://eap-csf.eu/eap-csf-presents-civil-society-perspective-on-policy/>, accessed 10 August 2022. Radiography of attacks against non-governmental organisations from the Republic of Moldova, available at https://crjm.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2019-03-20-timeline-atacks-OSC_2018_final-

to risk	organisations and groups reported that they were under pressure and risk; for example, the LGBT community in Moldova or organisations that were publicly critical or took a stand against the government or public administration.
Accountable	Usually, youth do not receive any clear feedback on how their participation has influenced the process they are consulted about. Moldova has a National Network of Local Youth Councils, which is a non-governmental organisation financed from the public budget, but the reports about their activity and impact on development of the youth sector are inaccessible.

In summary, access to public information in Moldova, particularly at the local level, is limited, making it difficult for young people to fully participate in the decision-making process. This is further compounded by the fact that decision makers often do not take the recommendations of young people into consideration, as shown in a U-Report survey conducted by UNICEF in January 2022. Many young people also lack the necessary skills and confidence to contribute their views due to a lack of understanding of legal terminology and mechanisms, and a lack of physical spaces, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, physical barriers, such as inaccessible infrastructure and discrimination faced by marginalised groups, hinder participation. Civil society organisations also face harassment and pressure, particularly those that are critical of the government or public administration. Despite the implementation of the Law on Transparency in the Decision-Making Process in 2008 and progress made at the national level, young people in Moldova continue to face challenges in participating in the decision-making process.

INSTITUTIONS OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Article 1(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova¹⁶ declares that “in Moldova the form of government is the republic”. After independence, declared on 27 August 1992, Moldova had the form of a parliamentary and semi-presidential republic. Based on recent legislative changes, Moldova can be considered a semi-presidential republic, where the president is elected by citizens of the country by freely expressed, universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage. The constitution defines the competences and methods of co-operation between parliament, the president as head of state and the prime minister as head of government.

In Moldova, the power is divided between the parliament, the President of the Republic of Moldova and the government.

The parliament¹⁷ is the supreme representative body of the people of the Republic of Moldova and the sole legislative authority of the state. The parliament is composed of 101 members. Based on Article 61(1) of the constitution, members of parliament are elected by universal, equal, direct,

[ENG.pdf](#), accessed 10 August 2022.

¹⁶. Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, available at www.presedinte.md/titul3#5; www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=111918&lang=ro, accessed 10 August 2022.

¹⁷. Parliament web page, available at www.parlament.md/, accessed 10 August 2022.

secret and freely expressed ballot. The parliament is elected for a 4-year term, which can be extended by law in case of war or catastrophe.¹⁸

The President of the Republic of Moldova¹⁹ shall represent the state and shall be the guarantor of national sovereignty, independence, of the unity and territorial integrity of the state. The legal conditions determined by Article 78(2) of the constitution for running for President of the Republic of Moldova are: “any citizen of the Republic of Moldova may run for the office of the President of the Republic of Moldova, provided that he/she has the right to vote and is over 40 years of age, has lived or has been living permanently on the territory of the Republic of Moldova for no less than 10 years and speaks the official state language.”

The government²⁰ carries out the state’s domestic and foreign policy and general management of the public administration. The government consists of a prime minister, a first vice prime minister, vice prime ministers, ministers and other members, as determined by law. Investiture of the government is organised in accordance with Article 98 of the constitution, where the President of the Republic of Moldova designates a candidate for the office of prime minister following consultations with parliamentary factions, and appoints the government on the basis of a parliamentary vote of confidence. The government is responsible for its work before the parliament.²¹

In Moldova, the main representative institution at the regional level is the district council. According to the law, the district council co-ordinates the activity of village and town councils with a view to carrying out public services at district level. District councils are elected and operate according to the law. This level includes the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia. According to Article 111 of the Constitution and to the Law on special legal status of Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri),²² Gagauzia is an autonomous territorial unit having a special statute and representing a form of self-determination of Gagauz people. It constitutes an integral and inalienable part of the Republic of Moldova and shall solve its internal problems independently, within the limits of its competence, pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, in the interest of the whole of society, in the political, economic and cultural spheres. On the territory of the autonomous territorial unit of Gagauzia all the rights and freedoms provided by the constitution and the legislation of the Republic of Moldova shall be guaranteed. Within the autonomous territorial unit of Gagauzia, there shall function representatives and executive bodies according to the law.

PRINCIPLES CONCERNING ELECTIONS

¹⁸. Law for the adoption of the Parliament’s Regulation No. 797-XIII of 2 April 1996, available at www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=111777&lang=ro, accessed 10 August 2022.

¹⁹. President’s web page, available at www.presedinte.md/eng, accessed 10 August 2022.

²⁰. Government web page, available at <https://gov.md/en>, accessed 10 August 2022.

²¹. Law on the Government No. 136 of 7 July 2017, available at www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=105700&lang=ro, accessed 10 August 2022.

²². Law on special legal status of Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri) No. 344 of 23 December 1994, available at www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=109411&lang=ro, accessed 10 August 2022.

The main legal framework for the parliamentary elections primarily comprises the constitution, the Election Code²³ and the Law on Political Parties.²⁴

In 2017, the Election Code underwent a series of significant amendments, including introducing a new electoral system in Moldova. The amendments shifted the electoral system from fully proportional to mixed, where 50 of the 101 MPs have to be elected through proportional closed lists in one nationwide constituency, and 51 MPs in as many single-member constituencies with candidates receiving the most votes elected.

On 15 May 2019, the parliament adopted the draft law on the amendments of some legislative acts (Election Code, Articles 1, 4, 8, etc.; Law on the Statute of the Deputy in Parliament, Article 2; Law on Political Parties, Article 26; etc.).²² The main goal of this law was to abolish the mixed electoral system in Moldova; the system is fully proportional in 2022. Participation in elections is based on citizens' free will. No one may exercise pressure on a voter to force him or her to participate or not in the elections, nor on the expression of a voter's free will.

The voting right is exercised in a polling station situated in the locality where the voter is registered for a permanent residence visa or at his domicile in accordance with national legislation.

5.2. YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

YOUNG PEOPLE AS VOTERS

According to Article 3 of the Election Code, "citizens of the Republic of Moldova have the right to elect and be elected irrespective of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, gender, opinion, political affiliation, property or social origin".

According to the law, citizens of the Republic of Moldova, who by the day of the elections have reached the age of 18, have the right to vote in elections in the Republic of Moldova.

In the election process, each voter casts his or her vote for one single electoral contestant, and expresses his or her will with respect to a single issue in a referendum.

In order to facilitate participation of all citizens in elections, Article 30 of the Election Code specifies that besides traditional polling stations, special polling stations may also be established at places where voters have limited mobility possibilities such as hospitals, homes for the elderly or where military units are located.

Moreover, Article 134 of the Election Code regulates special restrictions on suffrage, which are:

- (1) Active-duty military personnel shall not participate in local elections.
- (2) Voters who are not residents of the respective administrative-territorial unit may not participate in the elections of the local council and mayor.

²³. Election Code No. 1381 of 21 November 1997, available at www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=111378&lang=ro, accessed 10 August 2022.

²⁴. Law on Political Parties No 294 of 21 December 2007, available at www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=110636&lang=ro, accessed 10 August 2022.

During the parliamentary elections on 11 July 2021, 53.03% of registered voters participated, with 41.43% (of age 18-25) and 44.34% (of age 26-40) casting their ballots.²⁵ These percentages are higher than the turnout during the ordinary parliamentary election in 2019, where 37.8% (of age 18-25) and 39.7% (of age 26-40) voted, compared to an overall turnout of 50.57%.

In 2020, during the presidential election on 1 November, however, with a voting turnout of 52.1% (age 18-25) and 51.2% (age 26-40) out of total 48.54%, a higher participation of young people can be observed than in the parliamentary elections..

YOUNG PEOPLE AS POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES

One very important structure of youth representation should be covered by the youth wings of political parties, which could generate policy initiatives that could then be promoted by the party. The legal framework does not regulate the activity of youth wings of the political parties. However, youth wings of political parties mostly tend to carry out activities of campaigning and dissemination, promotion and protest in support of the mother-party, without having or focusing on a separate mission targeting youth as a policy sector or a political target group.

One considerable exception is the youth wing of the Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS). It is primarily focused on education and the development of new political leaders instead of active involvement in policy making. This focus allows them to contribute to policy making through the training and cultivation of local and national level politicians. Many of the founders and alumni of PAS Youth have gone on to play important roles within the party. In the 2022 national election congress, four alumni were elected to the national board of PAS, with the PAS Youth president also being a member. Additionally, three more alumni were elected as deputies, making a total of eight former PAS Youth wing members who are actively involved in national politics.

According to the national legislation, all citizens of the Republic of Moldova with the right to vote also have a right to be elected.. However, according to Article 13(2) of the Election Code, the following individuals have restrictions to become candidates in the election and cannot be elected:

- a) military personnel with full-time service;
- b) citizens of the Republic of Moldova who have not reached the age of 18, or those deprived of this right in the manner established by law;

²⁵. The total number of voters registered in the State Register of Voters, https://a.cec.md/ro/numarul-total-de-alegatori-inscrisi-in-registrul-de-stat-2781_99716.html, accessed 17 August 2022, https://a.cec.md/storage/ckfinder/files/Analiza%20de%20gen%20-%20parlamentare%202021_RO.pdf, accessed 17 August 2022.

c) persons who are sentenced to prison (deprivation of liberty) by a final court decision and are serving their sentence in penitentiary institutions, as well as persons who have unextinguished criminal records for crimes committed with intent. Electoral bodies are informed about the existence of criminal antecedents by the bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and/or by the National Integrity Authority;

d) persons deprived of the right to hold positions of responsibility by final court decision. Electoral bodies are informed about the existence of the ban by the Ministry of Justice, the National Integrity Authority and/or by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

In a parliamentary election, candidates can participate through closed party lists or an electoral bloc or as a party-nominated or independent candidate in single-mandate constituencies. Independent candidates cannot stand in the proportional contest.

According to Article 135 of the Election Code, which regulates the special conditions for candidates in an election, Moldovan citizens who are eligible to vote, and have turned 18 on or before Election Day, can be elected as councillors to local councils. Moldovan citizens who are eligible to vote and have turned 25 on or before election day, can be elected as mayors. Any citizen over 18 years old who has permanent residency in the country could be elected to the parliament. Finally, the president of the country can be any citizen of the Republic of Moldova over the age of 40 and with at least 10 years of work experience.

According to Article 131 of the Election Code, the lists of candidates for parliamentary and local elections shall be prepared having observed the minimum representation share of 40% for both genders. Furthermore, political parties complying with the minimum share of 40% for women candidates nominated within single-member constituencies are entitled to an expanded budget for funding.

The proportion of young people in the party lists registered at the elections of July 2021, in the two minor parties ('People's Power' and 'NOI') had the highest percentage of 49.1% and 47.2% respectively. The Electoral Bloc of Communists and Socialists had a lower percentage of 14.7% youth representation in the party lists.

Young people are not proportionally represented in the top 20 positions on the lists. Of the parties that won seats in parliament, Șor had 10% of young people in the top 20, Action and Solidarity had 20%, and the Electoral Bloc of Communists and Socialists only 5%. Following the parliamentary election of July 2021, there were 15 deputies aged 18-35 (14 after the 2019 elections).

The participation of youth at the local level is more impressive. Of the 86 councillors on the Municipal Councils of Chisinau (51) and Balti (35), 28 are young, which represents 32.5% of the seats, up from 26.7% in 2019.

Out of 10 472 mandates in local councils, 1 569 (or 14.98%) are held by young representatives. Out of 1 022 district councillors throughout the republic, 133 (or 13.01%) are young. Finally, there are 898 mayors in the Republic of Moldova, of which 102 (or 11.35%) are under 35 years old.

5.3. YOUTH REPRESENTATION BODIES

YOUTH PARLIAMENT

As of late 2022, there is no platform for youth participation in the decision-making process in Moldova.

The first Youth Parliament was launched on 25 February 2008 and was active till 2013. The Youth Parliament was a permanent forum of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, and acted based on the internal regulations adopted by members of the Youth Parliament. It was an independent initiative with its own elected president. Members of the Youth Parliament regularly held joint meetings with the relevant parliamentary factions and committees from the parliament. Additionally, all documents which were adopted by the Youth Parliament were addressed to the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, the government and its ministries for examination and consideration. For example, the first legislature of the Youth Parliament adopted five resolutions²⁶ which were submitted as proposals to the standing committees within the Moldovan Legislature as well as to the ministries covered by the respective documents.

The objectives²⁷ of the Youth Parliament were:

- a) involvement of young people in the process of simulation of the decision-making process within the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and the academic environment;
- b) obtaining practical knowledge and experience on parliamentary activity in the Republic of Moldova;
- c) assisting the activities of MPs in parliamentary committees, factions;
- d) maintaining a permanent dialogue with young people from rural areas;
- e) promoting participatory spirit and stimulating young people's initiatives in the country's public and political life;
- f) increasing the level of civic and political culture among the young people of the Republic of Moldova;
- g) combating young people's stereotypes about decision makers.

The main domains of the Youth Parliament were activities derived from the competences of parliamentary commissions:

- a) the education and youth policy commission;

²⁶. Resolutions of the five Committees adopted at Session I of the PARLIAMENT OF YOUTH, available at <http://old.parlament.md/download/youthparl/PT-1%20Book.pdf>, accessed 17 August 2022.

²⁷. Youth Parliament web page, available at <http://old.parlament.md/youthparl/>, accessed 17 August 2022.

- b) the commission for public administration, regional economy and development;
- c) the legal and human rights commission;
- d) the commission on foreign policy and European integration;
- e) the commission for social protection, health and family;
- f) the special commission on inter-ethnic conflicts and constitutional issues.

The first ever Youth Parliament was a permanent forum of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova that operated from 2008 to 2013. It was an independent initiative with its own elected president and was designed to involve young people aged 18-25 in the decision-making process within the Moldovan Parliament. Members of the Youth Parliament regularly held meetings with parliamentary factions and committees and all documents adopted by the Youth Parliament were submitted to the Moldovan Parliament and relevant government ministries for consideration. The Youth Parliament had six main commissions covering areas such as education and youth policy, public administration, legal and human rights, foreign policy and European integration, social protection, and inter-ethnic conflicts and constitutional issues. The project was funded by the US Embassy in Chisinau and the Embassy of the Netherlands in Kyiv, and aimed to include young people from all regions of Moldova, regardless of gender, religion or political affiliation. The number of members started at 51 and eventually grew to 101, with a 2-year parliamentary term. Members of the Youth Parliament worked on commissions and factions, and represented the Youth Parliament in visits to various state institutions. In parallel, the INVENTO Association implemented another project of simulation of the legislative process in Moldova called “Youth Parliament in Chisinau”. This project had six editions in the period 2017-2022.²⁸

YOUTH COUNCILS AND/OR YOUTH ADVISORY BOARDS

NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF MOLDOVA

The activity of the [National Youth Council of Moldova](#) (CNTM) is governed by the Law on public associations²⁹ and does not depend on other public bodies. It is an umbrella structure which includes tens of youth organisations, operating nationwide. The activity of the CNTM is based on non-discrimination, inclusiveness and diversity principles which are regulated by its statute.

Composition

The main organs running the association are as follows:

- a) the General Assembly;
- b) the Board;
- c) the President of the Association;
- d) the Audit Commission/Commission of Censors.

²⁸, INVENTO web page, available at <http://invento.md/index.php?id=346>, accessed 17 August 2022.

²⁹. Law on public associations No. 837 of 7 May 1996, available at www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=111775&lang=ro, accessed 25 August 2022.

According to the statute³⁰ of the CNTM, the supreme governing body of the association is the General Assembly, which in 2022 consisted of 38 member organisations.

The CNTM's decision-making body is the Executive Board, which consists of seven members. Usually, the executive board makes strategic decisions and the Secretary General, the head of the secretariat, makes operational and administrative decisions regarding the implementation of all projects. However, the secretariat's activities are monitored by the executive board and by the president in particular. The mandates of executive board members last two years with a possibility to extend for one more mandate.

The organisation consists of around 10-15 core staff members of the secretariat, including both full-time and part-time employees. In addition the CNTM counts among its force over 100 youth experts, mentors, interns and volunteers.

Role and responsibilities

The CNTM's mission is to empower young Moldovans to participate actively in society, to promote their interests with the government and international institutions and to develop youth associative structures through the implementation of programme activities, training, information, advocacy and consulting services.

The organisation's core directives are outlined in its organisational strategy, which establishes five organisational priorities:

- (i) Youth rights and social inclusion – a rights-based approach to youth policy creates a strong framework for an inclusive and participatory associative sector in Moldova. The CNTM continues to invest its efforts towards the full recognition of youth rights by focusing on research and documentation of the gaps and inequalities that affect young people's access to their rights.
- (ii) Youth policies – a strong institutional youth agenda and political commitment of relevant actors and youth stakeholders at all levels is key to successful youth policy. The CNTM works to strengthen tools of inclusive youth policies and to develop new mechanisms involving youth from all regions of the country in the process of consultation, development, implementation and monitoring of local and national action objectives.
- (iii) Developing institutional capacity of youth initiatives and organisations – strong youth organisations for a strong civil society. The CNTM provides guidance to youth groups and organisations. It develops sustainable support tools to promote a wider inclusion of youth from diverse social backgrounds in order to fulfil their potential in youth organisations and to contribute to creating a more connected society.
- (iv) Youth education – the recognition of non-formal education and the impact of youth organisations as key providers of quality education are at the core of the CNTM's efforts. The CNTM maintains its leading role in this process by contributing to evidence-based research, monitoring and improving policy development in the education and youth field, while improving its co-ordination with educational institutions.

³⁰. Statute of the Public Association "The National Youth Council of Moldova", available at http://cntm.md/sites/default/files/Statutul_cntm_0.pdf, accessed 25 August 2022.

(v) Economic and financial empowerment of young people – this priority has the objective of preparing young people for integration into the field of work.

Membership

At the national level, the CNTM is a member of the NGO Council, the National Participatory Council, the Anti-Discrimination Coalition, the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections, as well as the Coalition for Law and Volunteering Promotion. At the international level, it is a full member of the European Youth Forum, a member of the Eastern European Youth Co-operation and the Alcohol Youth Policy Network. In the Eastern Partnerships (EaP) and Black Sea region, the CNTM has experience as a leading youth organisation in promoting youth policies, through the youth side event of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and the Working Group IV “Contact Between People”.

Funding

The CNTM receives public funding through the 2% mechanism (percentage of the income tax redirected by citizens who submit their income declaration)³¹ and through the national grant programme for youth. Despite this, the CNTM receives the majority of its budget from international donors. The funding that comes from the state budget represents approximately 1% of the organisation’s budget. The CNTM presents all financial reports to the state authorities in accordance with the legislation in force.

NATIONAL NETWORK OF LOCAL YOUTH COUNCILS (NNLYC)

The [NNLYC](#) exists at the local level in Moldova; it is a youth non-governmental organisation consisting of youth councils at the district/municipal level, and tends to hold a representative position in relation to the central public authorities, and national and international non-governmental structures.

The activity of the NNLYC is governed by the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, the Law on Public Associations and the Framework Regulation of the Local Youth Council.³²

This NGO was founded in 2016, at the time when the programme for development of national youth councils was approved by the Ministry of Youth and Sport of Republic of Moldova.³³ The NNLYC receives public funding through the national programme for development of local councils, being financially accountable to the Ministry of Education and Research, but there has been a lack of public reporting and transparency of how it has used public funding over the three years of its activities.

³¹. State Tax Services website for the 2% mechanism, <https://sfs.md/en/page/desemneaza-2>, accessed 25 August 2022.

³². Regulations – Framework of the Local Council of Youth, available at <http://old.mts.gov.md/content/regulament-cadru-al-consiliului-local-tinerilor>, accessed 25 August 2022.

³³. https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/ordin_t276_din_05.06.2015_program_national_de_asistenta_crmt_3.pdf, accessed 25 August 2022.

Composition

The NNLYC is an umbrella organisation for 23 regions, municipal and local youth councils. The leadership of the NNLYC is elected by members of local councils. The president and general secretary co-ordinate the activities of the NNLYC. Within the NNLYC there is no division between the decision-making body and the administrative office, and people work simultaneously in both structures having different functions at various times.

According to the Framework Regulation of the Local Youth Council,³⁴ the council is made up of children and young people aged between 14 and 35 who are elected by direct, secret and freely expressed vote. Members of local councils are elected for a period of 4 years. The NNLYC meets with its member organisations on a regular basis according to the action plan.

Members of local youth councils also work in specialised committees, which are formed in order to solve the problems of young people. The specialised committees are consultative working structures of the national/local council and are meant to ensure the efficiency of local youth councils' work.

Role and responsibilities

The NNLYC and local youth councils aim to create a space for young people to express their ideas and interact with local authorities, decision makers and other social actors. They also aim to empower young people to identify and address their own problems by presenting recommendations to the local council and other authorities on youth issues. These councils provide young people with the opportunity to learn about democratic citizenship, communication and decision making, as well as develop leadership skills and become active citizens. Additionally, they encourage young people to participate in identifying and solving community problems, and promote equal opportunities for all youth while eliminating discrimination.

The NNLYC and local youth councils have several main tasks, including representing young people at the community level, identifying the interests, needs and problems of young people in the community, defining youth policies with local authorities, participating in the development and implementation of local action plans for youth, and submitting annual reports to the General Assembly and local council of adults. They also have the ability to submit proposals to the local council of adults for decision making and consult youth documents at the request of authorities. These councils are responsible for approving their budget and establishing collaboration with other similar councils. However, it should be noted that the NNLYC is passive in the decision-making process and does not participate in advocacy campaigns or youth coalitions promoting youth rights and needs.

³⁴. Programme for development of rational youth councils, available at https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/ordin_nr.t303_din_31.10.2016_cu_privire_la_aprobarea_regulamentului_de_functionare_a_consiliilor_de_tineret.pdf, accessed 25 August 2022.

HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT UNION

The Student Alliance of Moldova (ASM) structure

The non-governmental “[Student Alliance of Moldova](#)” is a public, independent, apolitical and non-profit organisation created by the free will of the members in order to achieve common goals determined by its statutes.

The main internal bodies running the association are:

- a) General Assembly;
- b) Board;
- c) President of the Association;
- d) Audit Commission/Commission of Censors.

Role and responsibilities

The Association of Students of Moldova (ASM) works to represent and advocate for the interests of students in Moldova. It is dedicated to improving the education system and promoting student rights, including the development of student self-governance structures. To achieve these goals, the ASM has identified several key areas of focus, including education policy, the quality of education, student accommodation, student participation, and student transition into the workforce.

Additionally, the ASM plays an active role in shaping education policy in Moldova. It provides information to its members on education-related activities, and contributes its own positions on education-related documents and policies. The ASM works to ensure that the needs and concerns of students are heard and considered in policy discussions.

Funding

The ASM does not receive public funds. It receives funding from sponsorship and voluntary donations by individuals and legal entities in the country and abroad, as well as national/international grants. The association presents all its financial reports to the state authorities in accordance with the legislation in force. In addition to the ASM, some Moldovan universities have non-formal platforms for participation in the form of a student parliament and government. The members of such structures are elected by students and have a mandate of one year.

Unfortunately, over the last few years, partly because of the Covid-19 lockdowns and the fact that so much of the educational process moved online, this structure has not been active and as of late 2022 it is facing difficulties in restarting its activity.

SCHOOL STUDENT/PUPILS UNION

National School Council (CNE)

Structure and composition

The [National School Council](#) of the Ministry of Education is a representative and consultative structure of the pupils, which ensures the right of children and young people to opinion and free expression. The activity of the CNE is determined by the relevant regulation³⁵ approved by the Ministry of Education.

There are 38 pupils in the CNE drawn from the 7th to the 12th grades, who are elected by open competition at the national level, upon the proposal of the pupil's school authorities (student council, school senate, etc.) from secondary education institutions (gymnasiums, lyceums). CNE members are elected for one school year and only for one mandate.

The CNE organises activities in two ways:

- 1) workshops, convened on a quarterly basis, during school holidays or rest days;
- 2) online/remote communication with and between CNE members.

According to the CNE regulation, its activity is based on non-discrimination; moreover, it regulates that students with special needs, if necessary, are permanently accompanied by their personal assistant.

Role and responsibilities

The aim of the CNE's activity is to make students' voices heard about respect for children's rights in the educational system.

The CNE's functions are:

- 1) to collect, generalise, formulate and propose to the Ministry of Education the views and expectations of pupils regarding access to formal and non-formal education, the quality of the educational environment (health and safety), educational policies, participation in the decision-making process, etc.;
- 2) to provide support to the Ministry of Education in monitoring children's right to education at institutional and district/municipal level;
- 3) to organise activities focused on the identification of needs, problems and interests of pupils they represent.

Despite its importance in promoting pupils' rights, there are voices among representatives of this structure that their participation is just a formality and that they cannot actually submit criticisms or propose concrete and meaningful recommendations to improve the situation of youth in schools. This is confirmed also by data from the U-Report survey by UNICEF conducted in January 2022 among 710 young people, according to which 44% of them said that the national and local authorities never take into account their opinion, while 52% of them said that the

³⁵. Regulation on the activity of the National School Council, available at https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/regulament_cne_2014_1.pdf accessed 25 August 2022.

authorities never take their opinion seriously.³⁶

Funding

The CNE is not a direct beneficiary of public funds, but the costs related to the CNE activity are covered by the Ministry of Education. At the same time, the travel costs of the delegated pupil and his/her attendant are borne by the local specialised body in the field of education.

OTHER BODIES WITH COMPETENCES IN YOUTH PARTICIPATION NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

This is organised annually by the National Youth Council of Moldova (CNTM) and aims to create a community of youth organisations and provide them with the necessary support in their institutional capacity building and to provide space for proposals and resolutions in order to advance the youth sector in Moldova. Usually, nearly 40 young people attend the conference, representing a diverse pool of organisations from Moldova.

ADVOCACY PLATFORM FOR YOUTH RIGHTS

This platform has the scope to protect youth rights and priorities, to represent the youth voice, and to promote youth interests in sectoral policies. The activity of the platform is governed by a regulation approved by all members.

Platform members are young people and non-commercial youth organisations committed to promoting young people's priorities, providing friendly services or other activities aimed at them, and whose mission is to develop the youth sector. As of December 2022, the platform consists of 49 organisations and five young activists. The advocacy platform for youth rights is organised by the CNTM, with the financial support of the East European Foundation.

NATIONAL YOUTH CAPITAL³⁷

Based on the experience of the European Youth Forum, this initiative aims to develop localities by involving young people and harnessing their potential, as well as encouraging the development of new ideas and innovative projects concerning the active participation of young people in society.

The [National Youth Capital](#) is organised annually and brings financial and logistical support from the central public authorities and local public administration to the winning locality (a city in Moldova).

GOVERNMENTAL COMMISSION ON YOUTH POLICIES

For more detail regarding the scope and competences of the Governmental Commission on Youth Policies, please see the Moldova contribution to Youth Wiki, Chapter 1: Youth Policy

³⁶. U-Report, Barometer of youth participation 2022, available at <https://moldova.ureport.in/opinion/2654/>, accessed 10 August 2022.

³⁷. The "Youth Capital" programme, available at <https://mecc.gov.md/ro/content/programul-capitala-tineretului>, accessed 25 August 2022.

Governance.³⁸

NATIONAL FORUM OF YOUTH WORKERS

This [forum](#) is organised annually by the “[Millenium](#)” [Training and Development Institute](#) and aims to create a community of youth workers and provide them with the necessary support in building a strong community of professionals and to provide space for sharing experience, discussing challenges, developing proposals and resolutions in order to improve youth work in Moldova. On 26-28 May 2022, 65 youth workers attended the forum and formulated a resolution.³⁹

The resolution outlined the need for recognition of Youth Worker and validation of the competences obtained in non-formal and informal contexts.

NATIONAL NETWORK OF YOUTH CENTRES

The Ministry of Education and Research implemented the Youth Centres Development Programme⁴⁰ for the years 2017-2022, which aims to strengthen institutional capacities for the development and territorial expansion of youth services, so as to increase the number of young beneficiaries and achieve the following objectives of the National Youth Sector Development Strategy 2020:

- increasing the level of civic activism of young people, including among young people with limited opportunities;
- strengthening local youth councils;
- diversification of young people’s methods of access to information;
- development of outreach services;
- intensification of measures to promote a healthy lifestyle among young people;
- expanding non-formal education services.

The programme for the development of youth centres for the years 2017-2022 is implemented in the administrative-territorial units of the Republic of Moldova where the local authorities are interested and undertake to develop and expand the territorial coverage of services for young people.

Beneficiaries

³⁸. For more detail see EU Youth Wiki, Chapter I: Youth Police Governance, available at https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262379/MOLDOVA_Youth+Wiki+Chapter+1_final.pdf/2781ad3b-80ac-5a48-ca83-9ee41a14c2b1, accessed 25 August 2022.

³⁹. National Forum of Youth Workers, <http://forumul-lucrtorilorde-tineret.tilda.ws/>, the article about Forum, <https://moldova.unfpa.org/en/news/unfpa-provides-support-government-and-invests-continuously-network-youth-centers-republic> and the Resolution, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/15oqP44vtNM02k0ka5d7YRTeBirWzSPH5/view?usp=sharing>.

⁴⁰. Web page of Ministry of Education and Research about the Youth Centres Development Programme, <https://mecc.gov.md/ro/content/programul-de-dezvoltare-centrelor-de-tineret>, accessed 25 August 2022.

The programme is intended for youth centres, public institutions constituted by local public authorities in levels I (local) and II (regional/municipal), including private non-commercial institutions, public associations and foundations, which, in co-operation with local public authorities in level II, will provide youth services at the district/municipal level or at the level of community groups.

Programme components are:

- component I: professional development of human resources within youth centres;
- component II: support for the development of the technical-material base of the youth centres;
- component III: support for the development of the district/municipal grant programme for competitive financing of youth initiatives/projects of youth organisations and youth initiative groups.

In April 2021, the [network](#) consisted of 42 youth centres⁴¹ all around the country and provided various services for young people.

OTHER BODIES WITH COMPETENCES IN PARTICIPATION THAT ARE CONNECTED WITH YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

Other national participation coalitions/platforms also exist at national level, which aim to promote participation, good governance and democracy in the Republic of Moldova. These platforms for participation are created by various organisations, including organisations which represent youth, including:

- a) ;
- b) (NP EaP CSF – includes 86 active NGOs from the Republic of Moldova, from areas like good governance, human rights, economic development, environment, energy, youth and social policies, trade unions and employers' unions).

5.4. YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN POLICY MAKING

FORMAL MECHANISMS OF CONSULTATION

As indicated earlier, there are two youth council networks in Moldova: the National Youth Council of Moldova (CNTM), which is an umbrella organisation for youth NGOs, and the National Network of Local Youth Councils (NNLYC), which is an umbrella organisation for local youth councils. Both of these organisations aim to involve young people in the policy-making process at the local and national levels. However, at the local and regional levels, the participation of young people in the policy-making process is relatively low. Despite an increase in youth participation in the 2021 elections, there is still a low level of youth involvement in regional or local councils.

The Law on Transparency in Decision-Making Processes⁴ was modified in 2016 to include

⁴¹. Leaflet about the National Network of Youth Centres created on April 2021, https://moldova.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/a4flyer_face_3-converted.pdf, accessed 1 September 2022.

guidelines on consultation mechanisms and methods across all policy areas. According to this law, all public authorities (both central and local) are required to consult with young people. The law outlines the consultation process, and in some cases, public bodies may issue additional guidelines on the significant participation of youth in the decision-making process to prevent tokenism, which often occurs at the local level.

The main methods for consulting with young people are through the online platform www.particip.gov.md and working groups and meetings with the participation of various national platforms such as the NP EaP CSF, CNTM and NNLYC. At the local level, consultations happen on a case-by-case basis and only when youth councils might be interested in specific projects and decide to get involved. At the national level, consultations take place regularly, and usually the responsible institution for the draft law invites organisations that work in this field to contribute to the improvement of the draft. Despite these measures to ensure participation, young people are still less involved than adults in the decision-making processes, such as consultations on the budget and the development of strategic plans. According to the Unequal Moldova study, only 20% of youth reported participating in decision-making processes.⁴²

ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE CONSULTATION MECHANISMS

When speaking about inclusion of specific target groups in the decision-making process, it is necessary to mention that this remains just a legal declaration regarding inclusion and non-discrimination. Proactive measures need to be taken in order to encourage the participation of youth with fewer opportunities, who are under-represented in such processes.

Public authorities

The main public authorities represented in youth consultation processes are the Ministry of Education and Research, but not just the ministry, because the portfolio regarding youth is not only in the competence of this ministry. At the regional/municipal level, there is a council represented by youth and education departments and other departments according to their competences, and at local level are town halls, local councils and schools.

Additional stakeholders involved in consultation processes are:

1. schools (class council and council school pupils, student initiative group);
2. community (local youth council, district youth council, Regional Youth Council of UTA Gagauzia);
3. initiative groups;
4. non-governmental organisations interested in the development of the youth sector;
5. participation in decision making through youth sector organisations or through the

⁴². These conclusions result from study “UNEQUAL MOLDOVA, Analysis of the most relevant inequalities in the Republic of Moldova”, available at <https://cntm.md/resurse-de-specialitate/unequal-moldova-analysis-of-the-most-relevant-inequalities-in-the-republic-of-moldova/>, accessed 1 September 2022.

National Participation Council (NPC). The aims of the NPC are to increase the culture of open and participatory policy making, and to contribute to the adoption of public policy decisions which would correspond to the interests of society. The council has a mandate of 2 years and consists of 30 members, who are representatives of organised civil society.

The policy initiatives supporting the importance of youth voice in the participatory processes led to the establishment of the advocacy platform for youth rights in 2021.⁴³ The advocacy platform has had the following results: out of 54 sets of recommendations (opinions on draft laws) on 11 public policies, 14 were retained (26%).

5.5. NATIONAL STRATEGY TO INCREASE YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The National Strategy for the Development of the Youth Sector (NSDYS) 2020⁴⁴ was approved by Government Decision No. 1006 of 10 December 2014. The strategy covered the period from 2014 to 2020.

The first priority of the strategy was youth participation, with the main objective “Increasing the level of involvement of young people in the process of consolidating a participatory democracy”.

An evaluation of the strategy was conducted in 2021 to assess its impact on youth participation. The evaluation found that there was progress towards the strategy’s main objective, but also identified areas for improvement in the future. These included the need to more clearly define and address the inclusion of young people with limited opportunities, establish a mechanism for addressing this aspect of participation, and standardise data collection on youth participation.

The evaluation also recommended improving co-ordination between different sectors and actors involved in the strategy’s implementation and increasing the involvement of young people in the planning and implementation of activities. Overall, the evaluation concluded that the NSDYS had contributed to increasing youth participation, but more work was needed to address issues of inequality and ensure the inclusion of all young people in democratic processes.

The Ministry of Education and Research has created a group of experts who are working (as of the end of 2022) on developing the new National Strategy for the Development of the Youth Sector 2030,⁴⁵ where youth participation can be also one of the priorities.

⁴³. Advocacy Group “Youth”: 2021 balance sheet, available at <https://cntm.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Bilant-advocacy-2021-.pdf> and <https://cntm.md/politici-de-tineret/advocacy-politici-de-tineret/grupul-de-advocacy-tineret-bilantul-trimestrial-ii-2021/?lang=en>, accessed 1 September 2022.

⁴⁴. The National Strategy for the Development of the Youth Sector 2014-2020, http://old.mts.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/anexa1_strategia_nationala_de_dezvoltare_a_sectoru_lui_de_tineret_pentru_anii_2014-2020.pdf, accessed 1 September 2022.

⁴⁵. The Concept of the National Strategy for the Development of the Youth Sector 2022-2030, https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/conceptul_strategiei_tineret_2030_si_a_programului_de_implementare.pdf accessed 1 September 2022.

5.6. SUPPORTING YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations

The Law on Youth regulates the statute and activities of non-commercial youth structures. The purpose of this law is to ensure that youth participation and multilateral development opportunities are created with a view to their active participation in all aspects of life, through full integration and engagement, through access to information and quality services in education, health and social economy.

Thus, according to the law, young people have the right to become volunteers in youth organisations which carry out their activity in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Moldova. Young people may be members or beneficiaries of youth organisations in accordance with their status. Respectively, youth organisations have a range of rights, such as:

- a) to participate in the process of developing, implementing and evaluating youth policies;
- b) to submit to the central and local public authorities proposals for amending the legislation on youth;
- c) to promote and support the common interests of young people through the development of programmes and activities at local, national and international level;
- d) to encourage and develop youth participation;
- e) to carry out non-formal education of young people and volunteering;
- f) to collaborate with national and international organisations, with central and local public authorities in the youth field;
- g) to initiate partnerships and work with central and local public administration authorities;
- h) to participate in competitions for constituting representative youth structures;
- i) to create centres for the development of skills acquired in non-formal and informal education.

As youth organisations usually have the form of a non-governmental organisation, it is relevant to mention that their activity also is governed by the Law on public associations,⁴⁶ which provides additional rights and obligations to the organisation.

Public financial support

As part of its annual grant programmes for youth organisations, the Ministry of Education and Research nominated 30 winners in 2022.⁴⁷ The total amount allocated to the Youth Grants Programme, financed from the state budget, is about 7 million Moldovan lei (MDL) (around €340 000).

The second form of support is based on the Law on 2%, which was adopted by Parliament on 21 July 2016. The percentage designation mechanism is an indirect way for the state to financially

⁴⁶. Law on public associations No. 837 of 7 May 1996, available at www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=111775&lang=ro, accessed 1 September 2022.

⁴⁷. List of winning projects under the Grants Programme 2022 for youth organisations, https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/lista_proiecte_castigatoare_pg_2022_2.pdf, accessed 1 September 2022.

support the work of NGOs and religious institutions.

Another form of support is the National Programme for Developing the Regional Youth Councils, with an annual budget of nearly €70 000, where the beneficiary of this programme is the National Network of Local Youth Councils.

The Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova launched the National Programme for Development of Youth Centres in 2017, with the aim of developing youth services at local level. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) became the core partner of the ministry under this programme, with the role of developing the human resources of the Youth Centres and strengthening the services provided to young people, including the most vulnerable. In 2018, the Swiss Co-operation Office in Moldova joined these efforts. These three partners created the “Joint Fund for development of Youth Centres and strengthening participation and civic engagement of young people in the Republic of Moldova”⁴⁸ for the period 2017-2022. The budget of the joint fund is €975 000 from the Ministry of Education and Research, US\$425 000 from UNFPA and €1 000 000 from the Swiss Co-operation Office in Moldova.

5.7. “LEARNING TO PARTICIPATE” THROUGH FORMAL, NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

FORMAL LEARNING

The education system in the Republic of Moldova is governed by the Education Code.⁴⁹ This code aims to develop citizenship by promoting fundamental ideas regarding intercultural dialogue and social inclusion. The main objectives of this education, however, are twofold: 1) develop defined competences, counselling in the choice of the individual’s educational or professional path to higher levels, depending on their potential, vocation and performance; 2) promotion of values such as love for the homeland, tolerance, acceptance, etc.

As a consequence of permanent evolution in Moldovan schools, two new mandatory disciplines were introduced from 1 September 2018, one of them being about “Personal Development” and the other named “Education for Society” (formerly known as Civic Education). The first discipline, “Personal Development”, contains several modules on personal hygiene, life safety, personal behaviour, and professional orientation. “Civic Education” is being re-conceptualised according to the European model, acquiring a new name and a new approach. The previous version of the course included modules on patriotic education, human rights, volunteering and democratic citizenship. Various categories of target groups are targeted, including young people.

⁴⁸. Joint Fund for the development of Youth Centres and strengthening participation and civic engagement among young people in the Republic of Moldova for 2017 -2022, Project fact sheet, available at <https://moldova.unfpa.org/en/publications/joint-fund-development-youth-centers-and-strengthening-participation-and-civic>, accessed 1 September 2022.

⁴⁹. Education Code No. 152 of 17 July 2014, available at <http://lex.justice.md/md/355156/>, accessed 5 September 2022.

NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

a) Participatory structures in formal education environment

One example of a participatory structure is the students' council, which is a participatory structure present in many educational institutions.

According to the Education Code, each school should establish students' councils, while the Ministry of Education and Research has developed in addition quality standards for "child-friendly schools" in primary and secondary education,⁵⁰ with special attention to the pupils' participation in the governance of their school. The quality standards, also addressing democratic participation, highlight the following:

1. Children should participate in the decision-making process regarding all aspects of school life.
2. The school institution should systematically involve the family and the community in the decision-making process.
3. School, family and community should commonly prepare children to live in an intercultural society based on democratic principles and values.

Even though every school receives accreditation based on these quality standards, and all schools have *de facto* pupils' councils, these unfortunately appear not to be efficient, according to reports, as the majority of the councils exist only on paper and hence do not offer any possibility for pupils to participate in the decision-making process. As a remedy, several projects implemented by civil society organisations focus on improving the role of pupils' councils and build their capacity as active participants in the democratic life of the school.⁵¹

With the support of the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Education and Research has also developed a methodological guide on "Democratic School Governance in the Republic of Moldova",⁵² which aims to encourage schools to empower pupils' councils as active stakeholders in the democratic life of the school.

b) Measures to encourage pupils to participate in the local community and society

There are various ways in which student participation is promoted and supported in education. Permanent competitions are organised at different levels to encourage a competitive spirit, reward high performance, and cultivate a generation of young people with potential. These competitions can range from regional and national Olympiads to international events. Information about these

⁵⁰. Quality standards for general primary and secondary education institutions from the perspective of child-friendly schools where special attention is offered to the participation of pupils in the governance of the school, https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/o970din_11_10_13_standarde_spc_0.pdf, accessed 5 September 2022.

⁵¹. Project "Enabling pupils to be involved in the decision-making process" <https://dacia.org.md/rom/proiecte-finalizate/abilitarea-elevilor-in-vederea-implicarii-in-procesul-decizional> <http://contact-cahul.md/335-proiectul-abilitarea-elevilor-in-vederea-implicarii-in-procesul-decizional-iii.html>, accessed 5 September 2022.

⁵². Methodological guide, "Democratic School Governance in the Republic of Moldova", <https://rm.coe.int/ghid-metodologic-ro/1680a5b008>, accessed 5 September 2022.

competitions and other opportunities for student participation, such as Erasmus+ projects and programmes like “Au Pair” and “Work and Travel”, can be found on the official websites of the Ministry of Education and Research and the National Evaluation Agency. These initiatives allow students to gain valuable experience and training, as well as the opportunity to travel and work abroad.

- c) Partnerships between formal education providers, youth organisations and youth work providers

Despite the lack of public funding, formal education providers and youth organisations appear to have a fairly good partnership through the exchange of volunteers between students, placement during classes, and co-operation between institutions and organisations. Some youth organisations are specifically focused on this kind of partnership with formal educational institutions, while there are also initiatives that support partnerships between institutions and organisations or student councils.

- d) Supporting non-formal learning initiatives focusing on social and civic competences

Such support is partly available under “Moldova 2030”, a project run by the Ministry of Education and Research, which focuses on the connection between education and labour market demands. At the same time, they promote the recognition of social and civic competences in the formal education system.

The main target group of the Moldova 2030 project (not to be confused with the National Development Strategy 2030, also known as Moldova 2030) are students under 30 years old, especially those involved in academic exchange programmes. Special attention is given to young people from socially vulnerable families facilitating the educational and participatory process through free places, scholarships and other forms of support designed to ease their work and educational process.

The [National Network of Local Youth Centres](#) also contributes to the development of social and civic competences through various services and projects implemented by youth centres in partnership with schools.

Terre des hommes (Tdh) Moldova, with the support of the Joint Fund, organises an annual open calls - “YouCreate – creative community initiatives made by young people for young people”, giving young people the opportunity to participate during one year in the funded programme of creative community initiatives implemented by young people for their peers in the community.⁵³

⁵³. YouCreate toolkit – Participatory arts-based action research for well-being and social change, <https://childhub.org/en/child-protection-online-library/youcreate-toolkit-participatory-arts-based-action-research-well>, accessed 5 September 2022.

A new programme was launched in 2022, “Participatory Budgeting in Schools”,⁵⁴ which is carried out by the Promo-LEX Association with the financial support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova and the Centre for Continuous Training in the Electoral Field. From 2022 to 2024, the programme will be implemented in 10 educational institutions in the country.

According to the agreement between Promo-LEX and the Ministry of Education, participatory budgeting is an effective method of democratic decision making that develops understanding of school budgets, encourages student leadership, directs funds to pressing needs and innovative ideas, and helps students appreciate democracy and civic engagement.

Secondary education institutions (gymnasiums and high schools), technical vocational education institutions (vocational schools, colleges, centres of excellence), special education institutions (special institution, auxiliary school), as well as institutions on the left bank of the Dniester River are eligible to participate in the programme.

The schools will be selected on the basis of a public competition. For the first round of implementation in 2022, five educational institutions will be selected. For the second round of implementation in 2023, another five educational institutions will be selected.

QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY GUIDELINES FOR NON-FORMAL LEARNING

At governmental level there are limited instruments enabling meaningful monitoring and quality assurance of non-formal learning. While quality assurance should follow well-set monitoring mechanisms with the targeted projects being followed by evaluators competent and knowledgeable about non-formal learning, this sets a major hurdle to overcome when there is still not enough of a strategic approach towards non-formal education as a stand-alone educational approach exists. At the same time, the existence of guidelines would provide a base for good practice and more accurate monitoring and evaluation.

One of the permanent criteria should primarily be for people with disabilities, people from socially vulnerable families and those from rural areas.

On the NGO site, among others the “MilleniuM” Training and Development Institute could be named, playing a bridging role in close co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Research. Since 2015 the organisation has implemented, with support from the ministry, the project “Promoting quality non-formal education in the field of youth”, in which one important element is organising a long-term training of trainers for youth workers, educators and teachers.⁵⁵ The project is focused on developing competences for trainers and youth workers based on the ETS

⁵⁴. Press release about the project, <https://mec.gov.md/ro/content/elevii-pot-fi-atrasi-activitatea-de-bugetare-participativa-scolile-care-invata>, accessed 10 September 2022.

⁵⁵. Long-term Training of Trainers in Republic of Moldova, organised annually by “MilleniuM” Training and Development institute, <http://formare-de-formatori.tilda.ws/>, accessed 5 September 2022.

Competence Model for Trainers⁵⁶ and the ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers.⁵⁷ It aims to improve the quality of non-formal education activities organised by trainers and youth workers for young people in youth centres, NGOs and schools. With the support of UNFPA, the first inception training for youth workers was organised in 2018, followed by some thematic trainings. From 2020, the “MilleniuM” Training and Development Institute developed the National Education Programme for Competences Development of Youth Workers⁵⁸ and as part of this programme is organising annual training courses from the ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers.

EDUCATOR SUPPORT

Teachers enjoy a series of practical guides, information sessions, knowledge improvement projects and good practices. Guidelines in the field are also provided by the Ministry of Education and Research.⁵⁹

These practical guides include:

- a) GUIDE: pupil participation in school;⁶⁰
- b) Guide for the participation of young people in the community;⁶¹
- c) Teaching Assistant “Intercultural Competence”;⁶²
- d) Highlights of intercultural education.⁶³

An important aspect for teachers in the education system is the qualification process by which they are entitled to confirm their teaching degrees.⁶⁴ Training courses, along with methodological support, are provided by the Ministry of Education and Research and occasionally with the support

⁵⁶. ETS Competence Model for Trainers, www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/trainercompetencedevelopment/trainercompetences/, accessed 5 September 2022.

⁵⁷. ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/tc-rc-nanetworktcs/youthworkers-competence-model/, accessed 5 September 2022.

⁵⁸. Open Call for National Education Programme for Competences Development of Youth Workers, www.facebook.com/milleniuM.md/photos/a.261731567179628/3020830254603065 and www.facebook.com/milleniuM.md/photos/a.261731567179628/5139739876045415, accessed 5 September 2022.

⁵⁹. Website of the Ministry of Education and Research with resources for teachers, <https://mecc.gov.md/ro/content/resurse-pentru-cadre-didactice>, accessed 5 September 2022.

⁶⁰. GUIDE: pupil participation in school, available at <http://cntm.md/ro/publication/ghid-participarea-elevilor-%C3%AEn-%C8%99coal%C4%83>, accessed 5 September 2022.

⁶¹. Guide for the participation of young people in the community, available at <http://cntm.md/ro/publication/%C3%AEncepem-cu-tineri-ghid-pentru-participarea-tinerilor-%C3%AEn-comunitate>, accessed 5 September 2022

⁶². Teaching Assistant “Intercultural Competence”, available at <http://cntm.md/ro/publication/auxiliarul-didactic-%E2%80%9Ecompeten%C8%9B-intercultural%C4%83%E2%80%9D>, accessed 5 September 2022.

⁶³. Highlights of intercultural education, available at <http://cntm.md/ro/publication/repere-ale-educa%C8%9Biei-interculturale>, accessed 5 September 2022.

⁶⁴. Regulation for the attestation/ certification of the teachers from the institutions of general education, technical professional, available at https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/regulament_atestare.pdf, accessed 5 September 2022.

of NGOs.

Furthermore, the government finances programmes to support and promote teachers and youth workers/trainers. During annual events, they are recognised for their contribution in developing the youth sector in Moldova.^{65, 66} They are also involved in exchanges of experience abroad for trainers through Erasmus+ exchange programmes. Young people are encouraged with merit scholarships and opportunities which exist abroad.

5.8. RAISING POLITICAL AWARENESS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

Information providers and counselling structures

In the Republic of Moldova, there are several institutions responsible for sharing information about democratic rights and values with the public. The Centre for Continuous Electoral Training (CCET) of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) is one such organisation, and it provides this information to a range of beneficiaries, including electoral officials, local government employees, NGOs, media outlets, political parties and voters. The CEC also operates a call centre and an e-learning platform where young people can access information about democratic rights and values. In addition to these resources, young people can also visit youth centres in Moldova, which are funded by the government and offer information, counselling, and specialised services. These various organisations and institutions work together to ensure that young people in the Republic of Moldova have access to information about democratic rights and values.

YOUTH-TARGETED INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS ABOUT DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES

Public authorities carry out very few information campaigns on democratic rights and democratic values.

Youth information campaigns were registered by the National Youth Council of Moldova (CNTM), which launched a social campaign to mobilise young voters at the 2019 rallies.⁶⁷ The campaign “I vote in spite of them” aims to mobilise young people with voting rights on election day through the messages sent in the campaign, but also through the social media spot “Dear young people, Do not Vote”, which caused various discussions and reactions.

Another information campaign dedicated to young people aged 18-35 was promoted and carried

⁶⁵. Gala of the National Awards for the Development of the Youth Sector, available at <https://mecc.gov.md/ro/content/anunt-privind-organisarea-galei-premiilor-nationale-pentru-dezvoltarea-sectorului-de-tineret>, accessed 10 September 2022.

⁶⁶. The tools for promoting the image and status of teacher, available at <https://mecc.gov.md/ro/content/promovarea-imaginii-si-statutului-de-pedagog>, accessed 10 September 2022.

⁶⁷. A link to the campaign information is available at <https://cntm.md/news/dragi-tineri-nu-vota%c8%9bi-mesajul-promovat-de-consiliul-na%c8%9bional-al-tineretului-din-moldova/>, accessed 10 September 2022.

out by Promo-LEX.⁶⁸ The main objectives of the campaign were to promote the importance of the vote and national consciousness, but also to increase the level of voter participation. The campaign included debates, information activities, electoral education and political mobilisation of Moldovan citizens with the right to vote, including young people and the diaspora.

Another campaign was dedicated to promoting the participation of people with disabilities in the parliamentary elections of 24 February 2019.⁶⁹ The objectives of the campaign were to guarantee the involvement of at least 2 000 people with disabilities and 400 support people in information and electoral education during the project implementation period and to raise the awareness of society on the electoral participation of people with disabilities.

In 2021, Promo-LEX developed the social campaign “IESI LA VOT – GO TO VOTE”, which was massively promoted via social media channels in order to reach young people and motivate them to participate in the elections. One of their video spots reached 1.1 million viewers and 17 000 shares on Facebook.⁷⁰

PROMOTING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

There are several initiatives and projects which promote intercultural dialogue among young people from different cultural backgrounds. One good practice example was the “Intercultural dialogue in Moldova” project (2010-2019), implemented by the National Youth Council of Moldova and financed by “Pestalozzi” Children’s Foundation. The purpose of this project was to increase the level of tolerance and intercultural dialogue of young people and children from Moldova between 13 and 17 years old, by developing their intercultural competences, as well as those of teachers, parents, youth workers, etc.

Another initiative working on minority issues is the Youth Platform for Inter-ethnic Solidarity, which strives to strengthen activists and organisations working on the rights of national, linguistic, ethnic and religious minorities in the Republic of Moldova. It was recently formed as an independent initiative group, but has already managed to launch several projects and activities. This initiative group is a dialogue platform designed to draw public attention to the problems of minorities in Moldova and to provide recommendations for their resolution.

PROMOTING TRANSPARENT AND YOUTH-TAILORED PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

Transparency in decision making is governed by the Law on transparency in the decision-making process,⁷¹ and this comes to support participation⁷¹ in the decision-making process of young people

⁶⁸. A link to the campaign information is available at <https://promolex.md/14678-pestes-232-de-mii-de-cetateni-informati-prin-intermediul-campaniei-turul-2-nu-va-fi-voteaza-din-prima/?lang=ro>, accessed 10 September 2022.

⁶⁹. A link to the campaign information is available at www.keystonemoldova.md/ro/projects/informed-and-assumed-vote.php, accessed 10 September 2022.

⁷⁰. Social video “Go to VOTE” www.facebook.com/150815778266005/videos/198440742054769, accessed 10 September 2022.

⁷¹. Law on transparency in the decision-making process No. 239 of 13 November 2008, available at www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=106638&lang=ro, accessed 10 September 2022.

and citizens in general. The law has the goal of increasing the direct participation of citizens, associations and other concerned parties in the decision-making process.

Citizens, associations and other concerned parties exert the following rights:

- a) to participate in the decision-making process at any stage of it, as stipulated by the law;
- b) to request and to obtain information regarding the decision-making process, including the right to receive the draft decisions and any additional relevant materials, as provided by the Law on Access to Information;
- c) to propose the public authorities to start the elaboration and adoption of decisions;
- d) to present the authorities with recommendations regarding the draft decisions, which are made available for debate.

According to the Law on transparency in the decision-making process, the meetings of the district councils are open to citizens, including young people. Therefore, youth are entitled to assist, monitor the meetings and to raise awareness about their needs. Another document that supports participation at the local level is the Law on the approval of the Framework Regulation on the establishment and functioning of local and district councils.⁷²

5.9. E-PARTICIPATION

According to Article 3 of the Law on transparency in the decision-making process, public authorities will consult citizens, associations and concerned parties about drafts of legislative and administrative acts. The law is applicable both to central and local authorities, including local public administration authorities: local councils (of village, commune, town and municipality), mayors of villages (communes), towns (municipalities), chairpersons of districts, decentralised public services, and institutions of local significance.

According to the Law on transparency in the decision-making process, the public authority has to place an appropriate announcement on its official website at least 15 working days before the draft of a decision will be examined by decision makers. They should also send it to the concerned parties by e-mail, post it inside or outside their headquarters in a space accessible to the public, and/or release the information to the central or local mass media, on a case-by-case basis. After public consultation, a summary of all received recommendations will be posted on the official website of the public authority. If the citizens, associations and other concerned parties have not presented any recommendations within the established term, and the public authorities find reasons not to organise any consultations, the draft decision may advance further to the adoption procedure.

One specific form of e-legislation in Moldova is regulated by Article 22 of the Law on normative acts No. 100 of 22 December 2017, which stipulates that in order to ensure transparency of the

⁷². Law No. 457 of 14 November 2003 for the approval of the Framework Regulation on the establishment and functioning of local and district councils, available at www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=101137&lang=ro, accessed 10 September 2022.

law-making process, the e-legislation information system is used,⁷³ operation and usage of which is set by the government.

To this purpose, the government has created an open portal (www.particip.gov.md) to increase participation in the decision-making process. The government and ministries publish the texts of draft laws as well as accompanying further information on this site, which is administered by the Electronic Governance Agency. All interested persons, including youth, can then have access to the draft laws submitted to public consultation, and submit their recommendations for improvement of the draft. The author of the project will send the draft decision or law to all interested stakeholders by e-mail. Finally, all interested persons can submit their recommendation to the competent authority by post or by e-mail. This online tool for e-participation is not addressed just to promote youth participation; it is addressed to all those interested in the decision-making process. There is no data or analysis measuring the relationship between e-participation and youth political engagement.

The objectives of the e-legislation tool are:⁷⁴

1. to ensure the transition of decision-drafting activity to the new generation of work based on computing technology and electronic records of all documents, online registration and application of draft legislation;
2. to integrate the e-legislation system with the external information systems of public authorities and institutions holding relevant data for the purpose of online retrieval and receipt of data and online submission of responses to requests related to the draft of normative acts;
3. to provide the public authorities and institutions of the Republic of Moldova with reliable analytical and statistical information on draft of normative acts;
4. to develop an efficient collaboration mechanism between the subjects involved in the drafting process;
5. to ensure control of access to project data and ensure its maximum security, etc.

On 8 September 2022, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova voted to offer MDL 8 million for the piloting of online voting, based on the recommendations of changes in the state budget.⁷⁵

5.10. CURRENT DEBATES AND REFORMS

REFORMS

⁷³. E-Legislation Information System available at www.egov.md/ro/legislation?page=3, accessed 10 September 2022.

⁷⁴. www.bizlaw.md/2016/11/01/sistemul-informational-e-legislatie-cat-a-costat-si-cand-va-fi-implementat, accessed 10 September 2022.

⁷⁵. The Parliament approved the amendment of the State Budget Law for the year 2022, <https://multimedia.parlament.md/parlamentul-a-aprobat-modificarile-la-legea-bugetului-de-stat-pentru-anul-2022>, accessed 10 September 2022.

In 2016, the Moldovan Parliament passed Law 215,⁷⁶ which established the National Agency for the Development of Youth Programmes and Activities (ANDPAT) as a key stakeholder in the country's national youth policy. This process took a long time, however, and so in 2020, ANDPAT was officially established as a sub-unit of the Ministry of Education and Research, with the mission of implementing state policy in the field of youth work, youth programmes and services, human resources, and research in this area. In 2021, a competition was launched to select the director of ANDPAT, which was eventually resumed in April 2022 and concluded in May 2022 with the appointment of a director by the Minister of Education and Research.⁷⁷ Following this, 6 years later, the process of registering the agency as an administrative authority began.

DEBATES

The UNFPA Country Programme Evaluation: Republic of Moldova (2018-2022)⁷⁸ says that youth issues are not sufficiently addressed in policy making:

- youth programmes are underfinanced because local public authorities (LPAs) do not allocate resources for youth support and development due to lack of efficient implementation at local level;
- there is no mechanism for effective youth engagement in decision making at the local level (youth and CSOs representing them are not sufficiently consulted during implementation of local policies).

Civic involvement of youth is low because of the lack of the culture and traditions for civic participation and a lack of mechanisms for policy dialogue with youth. Only 5% of young people are involved in local public budget consultation processes. As a result, up to 72% of the total number of programmes created for adolescents locally do not meet their needs and aspirations. Besides this, the low level of information and awareness of young people is a barrier that limits their participation in decision-making processes. Many young people, who are not part of formal participation structures, are unaware of the existing opportunities for participation at local and national level.

The involvement of youth in volunteering activities remains modest. About 11% of youth aged 15-24 and 8% of those aged 25-34 are involved in volunteering activities, such as assistance to schools, kindergartens, religious, charitable or cultural organisations; NGOs, trade unions, town halls; businesses and companies. 10.1% of youth aged 15-24 and 5.2% of those aged 25-34 are involved in political parties and 19.9% youth aged 15-24 and 17.5% of those aged 25-34 work for

⁷⁶. Law about youth www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=105800&lang=ro, accessed 10 September 2022.

⁷⁷. Results of selection for the position of the director of ANDAP, <https://mec.gov.md/ro/content/rezultate-concurs-106>, accessed 10 September 2022.

⁷⁸. The UNFPA Country Programme Evaluation: Republic of Moldova (2018-2022), www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/board-documents/Moldova%20-%20CPE%20-%20Country%20Programme%20Evaluation.pdf, accessed 8 September 2022.

the benefit of the community , or conduct other volunteer activities (3.2% and 2.6% respectively).⁷⁹

Some groups of young people, including young people with low academic performance, young people from disadvantaged groups, including young people of Roma ethnicity, young people with disabilities, young people from at-risk groups and vulnerable groups, are often excluded and do not participate in decision-making processes.

Current debates in the field are:

1. A New National Strategy of Youth Sector Development 2030 is in the last stage of development and will be offered for public consultation at the end of 2022.
2. The youth work and services provided by youth centres and youth organisations need to take into consideration the young refugees from Ukraine and create opportunities for participation and inclusion.
3. The Joint Fund for development of Youth Centres and strengthening participation and civic engagement of young people in the Republic of Moldova for the period 2017-2022 is showing positive results.

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⁷⁹. Ibid.

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