



MULTISECTORAL RESPONSE AND CAPACITY (MRC) ASSESSMENT Moldova

Joint and coordinated action for the prevention,
investigation, and assistance to victims of
Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse



FINAL REPORT
JUNE 2023



MULTISECTORIAL RESPONSE AND
CAPACITY ASSESSMENT (MRC) Moldova.

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National Capacity Building Program.

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ACRONYMS:

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ANRCETI:	National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology	MLSP:	Ministry of Labor and Social Protection
ARTEMIDA:	UN Women Moldova	MRC:	Multisectoral Response and Capacity Assessment
CDF:	Women's Law Center	NAP:	National Action Plan
CDN:	Content Delivery Network	NCMEC:	National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
CID:	Cybercrime Investigation Department	NCPC:	National Child Protection Council
CIDDC:	Center for Information and Documentation on Children's Rights	NCPP:	National Child Protection Program
CNFACEM:	National Center for Training, Assistance, Counseling and Education of Moldova	NPI:	National Probation Inspectorate
CNPAC:	National Center for Child Abuse Prevention	NRAECIT:	National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology
CoE:	Council of Europe	NII:	National Investigation Inspectorate
CSAM:	Child Sexual Abuse Materials	OCSEA:	Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
CSR:	Corporate Social Responsibility	SC:	State Chancellery
CSEA:	Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse	SCM:	Superior Council of Magistracy
ICMEC:	International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children		
ICMP:	Integrated Case Management Program		
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology		
ISP:	Internet Service Provider		
ITU:	International Telecommunication Union		
MEI:	Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure		
MEIRD:	Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure and Regional Development		
MER:	Ministry of Education and Research		
MIA:	Ministry of Internal Affairs		
MITC:	Ministry of Information Technology and Communication		

ABOUT ICMEC



The International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC) is a Non-Governmental Organization with two main lines of work: (i) the fight against Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) and (ii) support for the search for missing children throughout the world. Its headquarters are located in Alexandria, Virginia, USA. and also has representation in Australia, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Kenya, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, and Singapore. Since its formation, it has worked hand in hand with governments, law enforcement, the private sector, and civil society organizations to build institutional, legislative, and public policy frameworks to protect children and adolescents from disappearance, abuse, and sexual exploitation.

ICMEC's work in over 120 countries has promoted, among other actions, the formation of local partnerships for the implementation of policies aimed at eradicating sexual exploitation and the production of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM).

These activities have been supported by entities such as the United Nations (UN), INTERPOL, the Organization of American States (OAS), and other multilateral organizations.

ABOUT THE MRC ASSESSMENT



The Multisectoral Response and Capacity Assessment (MRC) is conducted based on the methodology developed by the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC), following the capabilities of the WeProtect Model National Response for preventing and tackling child sexual exploitation and abuse. It seeks to assess the current response of the institutions in Moldova along three pillars: prevention, investigation, and assistance to victims, in order to analyze, adapt, and adopt technical and technological tools which may improve effective actions of prevention, identification, and investigation of the sexual exploitation and abuse of children in digital environments. With this, it seeks to achieve a greater understanding of the actions that would allow the Moldovan national response to harmonize with the global strategic response promoted by the WeProtect Global Alliance.

INTRODUCTION

In 2017, for the first time, the Government of the Republic of Moldova approved a National Action Plan (NAP) to promote the safety of children online by involving a diverse range of authorities and public institutions. The implementation of NAP was challenging due to a lack of knowledge, tools, and professionals trained on child safety online issues. The key bottlenecks identified by the International Center La Strada, which conducted the assessment of the implementation of the NAP during 2020, were related to the lack of coordination, low level of awareness of stakeholders about child safety online, inconsistent data indicating challenges in data collection, and lack of budget to cover the implementation of planned activities, most of them being realized with the support of non-governmental organizations. One of the strategic recommendations formulated for the authorities was to develop further policies based on the Model of National Response developed by the Global Alliance "WeProtect" and ensure the gradual implementation of this Model.

The National Program for Child Protection 2022-2026, approved by the Government on June 1, 2022, planned the development of a new National Plan for the safety of children online during 2023. Given the context, the MRC Assessment brings its added value for the development of the new policy document by identifying the gaps that still exist and formulating corresponding recommendations to address them.

This analytical methodology provides guidance and support to countries and organizations to fulfill their commitment of preventing and mitigating CSEA within a framework that acknowledges that this scourge cannot be addressed in isolation, but rather requires the participation of various actors to ensure a comprehensive national response. The Model National Response (MNR) consisting of 21 capacities was in place at the start of this assessment. However, the WeProtect Alliance made some adjustments to the model, which are already contained in this assessment. The MRC assessment was conducted during November 2022 – May 2023.

To this end, the model proposes the following 20 capacities to be developed by six relevant sectors:

Preventing and tackling child sexual exploitation and abuse

A Model National Response



CAPABILITIES		OUTCOMES
POLICY, LEGISLATION AND GOVERNANCE		
1 Leadership Accountable, cross-sector national body with a clear mandate and resources to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse online, and willingness to engage in international collaboration	2 Legislation Comprehensive and effective legal framework to prosecute offenders and protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse in line with international human rights standards Legal provision to protect children engaged in consensual sharing of sexual content from criminalisation where appropriate.	Highest level national commitment to child sexual abuse prevention and response Comprehensive understanding of child sexual abuse within the highest levels of government and law enforcement. Willingness to work with, and coordinate the efforts of, multiple stakeholders to ensure the enhanced protection of victims and an enhanced response to child sexual abuse offending.
CRIMINAL JUSTICE		
3 Dedicated law enforcement Human and technical capabilities to investigate child sexual abuse online and offline, including cross-border cases Trauma-informed training for law enforcement Coordination with victim support services	5 Offender management process Multi-agency system to identify, manage and rehabilitate sex-offenders, and statutory tools (rehabilitation and education programmes, community supervision)	Effective and successful child sexual abuse investigations, convictions and offender management Law Enforcement and judiciary have the knowledge, skills, systems and tools required to enable them to perform victim-focused investigations and secure positive judicial outcomes. Child sexual abuse offenders are managed and reoffending prevented.
4 Judiciary and prosecutors Specialist training on child sexual exploitation and abuse and technology-enabled offending Child-friendly and victim-centred protocols	6 Access to image database National database with access to the Interpol's ICSE database for international collaboration, supported by alignment with terminology for CSAM categorisation	
VICTIM SUPPORT AND EMPOWERMENT		
7 End-to-end support Planned, integrated and multi-stakeholder support for victims and survivors Services are inclusive and sensitive to age, gender, sexuality, disability and ethnicity. Psychological support across dedicated law enforcement, frontline workers accessing image databases, child protection workforce, and hotlines	9 Compensation, remedies and complaints arrangements Provision of measures to allow children and victims accessible support in compensation, legal remedies and complaints procedures	Appropriate support services for children and young people Children and young people have access to services that support them through the investigation and prosecution of crimes against them. They have access to shelter; specialised medical and psychological services; and rehabilitation, repatriation and resocialisation services.
8 Child protection workforce Skilled, specialist statutory workforce trained, coordinated and available to provide trauma-informed support to protect and support children at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation online Guidelines for frontline professionals on emerging and complex issues such as child "self-generated" sexual material	10 Child helpline Accessible to all children, nationwide, toll-free, available 24/7, voice and text based, offering confidential support and counselling with appropriate referral mechanisms. Robust data protection systems Counsellors with specific training in online harms	

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

11 Child sexual exploitation and abuse hotline

Dedicated portals/hotlines for the public to report suspected child sexual exploitation and abuse online
Cooperation with law enforcement and the technology industry

12 Education programmes

National education programme (including age- appropriate, accessible and inclusive content) to raise awareness of all forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse – empowering children, young people, parents, guardians, caregivers and practitioners with relevant information
Systematic training for professional in education, social care and health

13 Child participation

Children and young people encouraged and enabled to give ideas and influence policy and practice relating to child sexual exploitation and abuse
Child protection, children's rights frameworks, and trauma-informed practice utilised when engaging children

14 Offender prevention and support systems

Support to prevent people with a sexual interest in children from abusing or accessing child sexual abuse material
Support for convicted offenders as part of rehabilitation response
Specialised support for children displaying harmful sexual behaviour

15 Informed and ethical media reporting

Evidence-based and sensitive reporting that respects victims' and survivors' rights and dignity



Child sexual abuse prevented

Children and young people are informed and empowered to protect themselves from child sexual abuse. Parents, carers, teachers and childcare professionals are better prepared to keep children safe from child sexual abuse, including addressing taboos surrounding sexual abuse.



INDUSTRY

16 Takedown procedures and reporting

Local removal and blocking of child sexual abuse material online
Procedures for timely removal of child sexual abuse material when a company confirms its presence
Statutory protections for industry to report child sexual abuse, including content transmission to law enforcement or a designated agency
Global and cross-sector collaboration

17 Innovative solution development

Technological solutions to prevent and address child sexual exploitation and abuse online

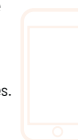
18 Responsible business conduct

Child protection and safeguarding policies, due diligence and remediation that address child sexual exploitation and abuse online



Industry engaged in developing solutions to prevent and tackle child sexual abuse

The public can proactively report child sexual abuse offences. Industry has the power and willingness to block and remove child sexual abuse material online and proactively address local child sexual abuse issues.



RESEARCH AND DATA

19 Research and data

Data, research and analysis on the threat of and response to child sexual exploitation and abuse online
Robust administrative data systems (e.g. police, courts, social services) to monitor service delivery, access and effectiveness and provide regular insights for decision-makers

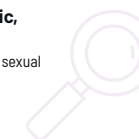
20 Universally agreed terminology

Information and policies communicated clearly and in alignment with international standards



Awareness raised among the public, professionals and policy makers

Potential future offenders are deterred. Child sexual abuse offending and reoffending is reduced.



ENABLERS

Cross sector, multidisciplinary collaboration

Willingness to prosecute, functioning justice system and rule of law

Supportive reporting environment

Aware and supportive public and professionals, working with and for children

Sufficient financial and human resources

National legal and policy frameworks in accordance with the UNCRC and other international and regional standards

Data and evidence on child sexual abuse

GOALS

Develop a reference framework of national response for the Moldovan Government on the issue of Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, guided by the standards set by the WeProtect Global Alliance.

OBJECTIVES

General Objective

To develop a framework for the construction of a strategic plan that will enable ICMEC, International Center La Strada, the Government of Moldova, and other relevant actors to undertake the consolidation of a Model National Response (MNR) and guide a work plan based on the identified gaps to counter sexual exploitation and abuse of children and adolescents online.

Specific Objectives

- Identify the gaps in Moldova's National Response to Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA)
- Formulate the priorities for actions to respond to identified gaps, based on the international standards set by the Model National Response proposed by the WeProtect Global Alliance
- Provide input for the development of the National Action on Child Safety Online, based on the Model National Response

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the goals and objectives of the MRC Assessment, the methodology included the following research methods:

- Analysis of open-source information, national research, national reports, and available statistics on OCSEA
- Collection of data from relevant stakeholders responsible for the implementation of measures on the 20 capacities established in the WeProtect Model for National Response
- Conducting of individual, semi-structured interviews with representatives of national authorities, responsible for the implementation of policies aimed at ensuring the protection of children in the online environment

The following authorities and organizations were involved for the purpose of the MRC Assessment:

Participating Institutions

SECTOR 1: Policy, Legislation and Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ministry of Labor and Social Protection •Ministry of Internal Affairs •Ministry of Education and Research •Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization
SECTOR 2: Criminal Justice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •General Police Inspectorate •Cybercrime Investigation Direction •Center for Combatting Trafficking in Persons •General Prosecutor's Office •Supreme Court of Justice •National Institute of Justice
SECTOR 3: Victim Support and Empowerment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ministry of Labor and Social Protection •CNPAC (Barnahus) •La Strada •CNFACEM •ARTEMIDA •CIDDC
SECTOR 4: Society and Culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •National Administration of Penitentiary •National Inspectorate of Probation •La Strada •CNFACEM •ARTEMIDA •CNPAC (Barnahus) •CIDDC
SECTOR 5: Industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ATIC •Moldtelecom •Orange •Moldcell •National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communication and Information Technology of the Republic of Moldova



SECTOR 1: POLICY, LEGISLATION AND GOVERNANCE

Highest level national commitment to child sexual abuse prevention and response

Comprehensive understanding of child sexual abuse within the highest levels of government and law enforcement. Willingness to work and coordinate multi-stakeholder efforts in order to ensure improved protection of victims and a better response to child sexual abuse crimes.

CAPACITY 1: Leadership

To have an accountable, cross-sectoral national body with a clear mandate and resources to protect children and adolescents from online sexual exploitation and abuse, and a willingness to engage with other international actors.

FINDINGS:

- In Moldova, a government body that is mandated to coordinate policies, guidelines, and programs aimed at protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation online is lacking. The first attempt to place the topic on the agenda of any authority was in 2016, when following the initiative of the National Child Protection Council (NCPC), the first policy on the promotion of child safety online was developed. The prior Ministry of Information Technology and Communication (MITC) was tasked with the coordination of the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP). After the optimization reform in 2018, the subject of child online safety reached the agenda of the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure (MEI). The National Action Plan expired in 2020, so currently there is no single authority that supervises the development of public

policies and the coordination of national actions focused on the protection of children and adolescents on the Internet.

- Measures regarding the protection of children online have been included in the National Child Protection Program (NCP), developed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP), approved in June 2022. Accordingly, an Action Plan reflecting more detailed measures should be developed by the end of 2023. A list of authorities tasked with the development of the Action Plan includes: Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP), Ministry of Education and Research (MER), National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology of the Republic of Moldova (NRAECIT), State Chancellery (SC), NGOs.¹ However, there is a lack of clarity regarding the responsibilities of governance structures and respective ministries, a limited understanding of the issue within the government, and a limited state budget to cover these efforts.

- In the context of the Moldova's candidate status to the European Union, the Government undertook several actions in line with European Union

¹ https://lastrada.md/pic/uploaded/A_Research_Child_online_safety_2020.pdf

requirements. Some of the priorities reflected in the Action Plan for the implementation of the measures proposed by the European Commission in its Opinion on the application for the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the EU are focused on combatting Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse:

- Connecting national strategies of the Republic of Moldova in the area of internal affairs with the EU vision regarding the implementation of the security ecosystem, with regard to cybercrime (including child sexual abuse), exchange of information, capacity building and awareness;
 - Developing new mechanisms of cooperation for law enforcement capable of managing the increase in the number of transnational crimes in the new security context, including the creation of an advanced EU operative axis in Chisinau for a synchronized approached in the field of internal affairs;
 - Alignment of criminal and procedural law with the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) and Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention).
- Moreover, in 2022, the Government of Moldova created the specialized Commission mandated to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention.² The Commission serves as a coordinating mechanism between various agencies regarding the implementation of policies related to the protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation, online and offline. Being co-chaired by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP), it gathers representatives of public authorities, including the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure and Regional Development

(MEIRD), responsible to develop policies related to digitalization and the development of the information technology industry. One of the identified gaps is the low capacity of the secretariat of the specialized Commission to ensure the functioning of the inter-ministerial body, and analytical capacities to process national reports on the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention by national authorities.

CAPACITY 2: Legislation

To have an effective legal framework capable of prosecuting offenders and protecting children and adolescents from all forms of exploitation and abuse, in accordance with international human rights standards. Likewise, to have a legal provision to protect minors involved in the consensual exchange of sexual content from being criminalized, when appropriate.

- The Republic of Moldova ratified several international treaties committing to align the national legal framework to international and regional standards, such as:
 - The Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
 - The Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (the Budapest Convention)
 - The Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the Lanzarote Convention)
 - The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention)

² Government Disposition regarding the establishment of the specialized Commission for the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Convention of the Council of Europe for the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and the approval of its Regulation, no 66-d from 19.05.2022.



- Recent reforms to the legislation aimed at improving the legal framework according to the provisions of the Istanbul Convention which led to significant changes in the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code, focused on several areas³:

- The exclusion of the removal of criminal liability as a result of reconciliation between the victims and the offender (changes operated in the art. 109, par. (1) Criminal Code).
- Redefining the crime of rape, according to the provisions of the Istanbul Convention. According to the new legal amendments, rape is a non-consensual sexual act (art. 171 par. (1) Criminal Code)
- Redefining the sexual consent of the victim expressed in cases of sexual assault as follows:

A sexual act or an action of a sexual nature that is accompanied by physical or mental coercion, applied to the victim or another person, or in which the person's inability to defend themselves or to express their will is taken advantage of, is considered non-consensual. (art. 132² par. (3) Criminal Code).

- Reviewing the concept of non-consensual acts of a sexual nature, other than rape:
- According to art. 132² par. (1) Criminal Code, sexual acts are the actions of vaginal, anal, or oral penetration of a sexual nature, with any part of the body or any object. Actions of a sexual nature mean any other means of obtaining sexual satisfaction other than those indicated in paragraph (1), as well as actions other than those falling under art. 173 and art. 287 of the Criminal Code or art. 354 of the Contravention

Code (art. 132² par. (2) Criminal Code).

- Amending the provisions related to the classification of actions of sexual nature, other than rape, perverted actions, actions of sexual corruption against the minor, which can be exhibition, indecent touching, obscene or cynical discussions with the victims regarding sexual relations.
- According to art. 174 par. (1) of the Criminal Code, the consensual sexual act⁴, committed knowingly with a person who has not reached the age of 16, is punishable by imprisonment from 2 to 5 years.
- According to art. 175 par. (1) of the Criminal Code, consensual sexual acts, committed knowingly with a person who has not reached the age of 16, are punishable by imprisonment from 1 to 3 years.
- Art. 175¹ par. (1) of the Criminal Code was amended to incriminate the proposing, persuading, manipulating, threatening, promising to offer advantages in any form, carried out including through information technologies or electronic communications, in order to establish a meeting with a minor, including through electronic communications networks with the aim of committing against them a crime regarding their sexual life, if these actions were followed by material facts leading to such an encounter.
- Art. 177 par. (3) of the Criminal Code was updated to incriminate the dissemination of information of a sexual nature, including images and recordings with sexual content, including through information technologies, for the purpose of revenge, hatred, humiliation or damage to

³ The law no. 316 of 17.11.2022, in force since the 9th of January 2023.

⁴ In Republic of Moldova, the legal age of consent to sexual acts is 16 years old.



the honor and dignity of the person.

- In addition, there are ongoing legal initiatives aiming at improving the legal framework specifically on OCSEA:
 - Amendments to the Criminal Code, in line with the provisions of the Lanzarote Convention; and
 - Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code and other special laws to ensure a better cooperation framework of police with the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) companies.

MAIN GAPS - SECTOR 1: POLICY, LEGISLATION, AND GOVERNANCE

- A government body that is mandated to coordinate policies, guidelines, and programs relating to the protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation online is lacking.
- The low capacity of the secretariat of the specialized Commission to ensure the functioning of the inter-ministerial body, and analytical capacities to process national reports on the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention by national authorities.
- Lack of a comprehensive policy on child safety online, promoting the prevention and protection of children from OCSEA and effecting actions to combatting child sexual abuse materials (CSAM).
- National criminal law is not in line with the Lanzarote Convention and European Directive 2011/93/UE regarding the criminalization of the participation of children in pornographic performances, as well as the sanctions provided for crimes related to child sexual abuse materials.
- Lack of an updated explanatory decision and guidelines regarding the interpretation and implementation of the new legal provisions criminalizing sexual violence by law enforcement and justice stakeholders.



SECTOR 2: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Effective and successful Child Sexual Abuse investigations, convictions, and offender management

Law enforcement and the judiciary possess the necessary knowledge, skills, systems, and tools that enable them to conduct victim-centered investigations and ensure positive judicial outcomes. CSEA offenders are managed and their recidivism is prevented.

CAPACITY 3: Dedicated Law Enforcement

The country has teams whose human and technical capabilities enable them to investigate CSEA both online and offline, including cross-border cases. They have trauma-informed training for law enforcement and good coordination with victim assistance services

FINDINGS:

- The investigation of CSEA offline is conducted by territorial police inspectorates within the General Police Inspectorate, according to the regional competence. According to art. 257 of the Code of Criminal Procedure the criminal investigation is carried out in the sector where the crime was committed or, at the decision of the prosecutor, in the sector where the crime was discovered, or where the suspect, the accused or most of the witnesses are located. The investigation of OCSEA is conducted by the Cybercrime Investigation Department (CID) within the National Investigation Inspectorate (NII) of the General Police Inspectorate. The investigation of child trafficking is carried out by the Center for Combatting Trafficking in

Persons, within the National Investigation Inspectorate of the General Police Inspectorate.

The Child Protection Section of the CID receives NCMEC reports in Moldova. The cases are prioritized taking into account the following criteria: the existence of victims, the gravity of the act, the new modus operandi of the perpetrator, etc. There is no formalized procedure for selecting priority cases. In the last years, the Cybercrime Investigation Department received the following number of CyberTip reports from NCMEC:

2019 – 10,516 reports
2020 – 5,993 reports
2021 – 9,547 reports
2022 – 8,372 reports

- The Child Protection Section of the CID has access to various technologies to support in dealing with cases of OSCEA, purchased with the support of international partners. However, taking into account the trends and developments in the modus operandi of perpetrators, there is a constant need to equip the specialized police unit with new technology and licenses, enabling more

efficient investigations. Another challenge is related to the funding needed to cover the costs for technological tools and licenses, as all of these were purchased with the support of international organizations and external funding, depending on the agenda of the donors.

- Moldovan police conduct various prevention programs in partnership with NGOs. The General Police Inspectorate has partnership agreements with several NGOs (La Strada, National Center for Child Abuse Prevention (CNPAC), Women's Law Center (CDF)) with whom they cooperate to conduct awareness-raising sessions in schools or for the general public. The activities which are implemented are not part of systemic prevention programs, but are organized in the context of national campaigns aiming to sensitize the general public about the issue of CSEA.

CAPACITY 4: Judiciary and Prosecutors

The country has all the specialized training on CSEA whose cases are facilitated by means of technology. Tailored, victim-centered protocols are in place.

FINDINGS:

- The prosecutors in Moldova are specialized in certain categories of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, particularly on child trafficking and other related crimes, including OCSEA. There is a specialized unit in the Prosecutor's Office for Combating Organized Crime and Special Cases responsible for the investigation of human

trafficking and cybercrime. Similarly, there is a specialized section within the General Prosecutor's Office responsible for methodological support and guidance of prosecutors investigating human trafficking cases and cybercrime. There is no specialized unit of Prosecutors for the investigation of other CSEA crimes, those being in the mandate of the Minors Protection Service.

- During January 2020 – March 2022, the Judiciary was partially specialized, operating only at the level of Courts of Appeal. The Superior Council of Magistracy accepted the request of the General Prosecutor's Office regarding the specialization of judges in combatting human trafficking and other related crimes. Specialized judges were appointed for a period of five years, with the possibility of extending the term. Moreover, within the Courts of Appeal, two panels of judges specialized in combatting human trafficking and related crimes were appointed.
- On July 19, 2022, the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM) abrogated its decision no. 34/3 of 24.01.2020 regarding the specialization of judges on combatting human trafficking and other related crimes. The main reasons for canceling the specialization were related to general provisions in the law regarding the random assignment of cases to the judges, through the automated case management program (art. 344 from the Code of Criminal Procedure). In addition, the SCM plenary noted that the implementation of specialization in the field of combating human trafficking and other related crimes in time did not lead to the expected results because of some suspicions which arose regarding the formation of the panels of presidents of the courts, which undermined the confidence in the efficiency in conducting justice. According to the generalized statistical analysis, judges assigned as "specialized" saw an increased body of work, as the Integrated Case Management Program (ICMP) could not reduce the workload of judges, taking into account their



specialization. Thus, judges specialized in the field of combatting human trafficking and other related crimes, on top of the cases randomly assigned by the ICMP, also examined cases according to their specialization. Therefore, the workload of specialized judges was higher than of other judges in the court.

- The training for prosecutors and judges is conducted by the National Institute of Justice, the public institution that carries out the initial training of candidates for the positions of judge and prosecutor, the ongoing training of judges and prosecutors, judicial assistants, prosecutors' consultants, probation counselors, and other professionals working in the justice sector.
- The National Institute of Justice included in the formal curriculum for the continuous training of prosecutors and judges topics related to the vulnerability of victims, modus operandi, and the profiles of offenders online and offline. Lately, at least two trainings of 16 hours each were organized on topics related to the efficient investigation and examination of OCSEA, including topics related to the vulnerability of victims and the modus operandi of perpetrators. In addition, similar training is conducted on the investigation and examination of sexual assault cases (committed offline).
- The National Institute of Justice included specialized training programs for prosecutors and judges on CSEA and child protection. The training on "Methodologies and Tactics for Investigating and Examining Cases of Sexual Crimes Committed through Information Technologies – Aspects of Online Abuse of Minors" is conducted in partnership with La Strada twice a year for a group of 30 participants per training (15 prosecutors and 15 judges). A separate Module refers to the protection of minors, including the following topics: "Psycho-physiological Aspects of Children Involved in Crimes of a Sexual Nature,"

two training, eight hours each, 30 participants per training (15 prosecutors and 15 judges), and "The Investigation of Sexual Assault Crimes Committed by Minors against Minors", two trainings, eight hours each, 30 participants per training (15 prosecutors and 15 judges).

- According to the national law, the hearing of children should be conducted under special conditions, in specially designed rooms, by trained interviewers. The hearing is video- and audio-recorded and is presented in the court as evidence, to avoid the child having to repeat their testimonies, causing revictimization. No specific technological tools are recommended and there is a lack of national standards regarding the operation of these specially arranged rooms.
- In July 2021, the General Prosecutor's Office approved a Guideline for prosecutors with services to which children and their parents may be referred for support, based on identified needs. The Guideline provides explanatory notes about how prosecutors should ensure the access of victims to support services, by informing victims about their rights, evaluating the emerging risks they may be exposed to and their needs, informing the victims regarding the available services at the national and local level, conducting the psychological evaluation assessment of victims to determine the psycho-behavioral consequences of the exploitation, facilitating her access to legal assistance guaranteed by the state.



CAPACITY 5: Offender Management Process

The country has a multi-agency system to identify, manage, and rehabilitate sex offenders and legal tools (rehabilitation and education programs, community supervision).

FINDINGS:

- During 2020-2021, La Strada conducted the first in-depth analysis on the profile of child sex offenders (online and offline). The methodology of the research presupposed a desk analysis, interviews and focus groups with professionals, and interviews with convicted sex offenders. The research is not public, and it has restricted access only for professionals working on CSEA cases.
- A program for the prevention and recidivism of sexual offenders was piloted during 2017-2018 by the Department of Penitentiary Institutions. Since then, the program continued to be implemented by certain penitentiary institutions. It is not widely implemented because of the lack of professionals trained to apply it into practice, and because it was not fully adapted to the national context. There is high staff turnover in the penitentiary system, therefore many psychologists who were trained to apply the program do not work in the system anymore. Another challenge was related to the refusal of convicted offenders to attend the entire program because they were afraid of being targeted by other inmates for attending the program.
- Moldova does not have a registry of child sex offenders; however, first discussions were carried out regarding the need for such a monitoring system. Guidance and support are needed for the development of national sex offender register and statutory tools, in line with international best practices.

CAPACITY 6: Access to Image Databases

To have a national database with access to INTERPOL's ICSE database for international collaboration, supported by alignment with the terminology for the categorization of CSAM.

FINDINGS:

- The Child Protection Section of the Cybercrime Investigation Department is connected to ICSE database. However, the information is only used by police and the Prosecutor's Office does not have access to the ICSE database.
- The country does not have a national image database that stores and registers CSAM online.

MAIN GAPS - SECTOR # 2 CRIMINAL JUSTICE

- Lack of dedicated law enforcement investigating offline child sexual abuse.
- Moldova is lacking a national sex offender registry in line with international best practices.
- Shortage of professionals trained to implement programs for the rehabilitation of sex offenders in all penitentiaries, adapted to the national context and validated for the population.
- Need for ensuring funding to conduct training on topics related to the investigation of sexual violence cases, OCSEA, child-oriented investigation, prosecution, and examination of cases, etc.
- Lack of capacity to conduct investigation, forensic analysis, collecting and handling digital evidence at the local level, determined by the lack of specialization of local police in the investigation of cybercrime and lack of access of local police to databases and technologies allowing to investigate OCSEA.
- Lack of funding to ensure that police are equipped with the latest technologies and licenses to combat Online Child Sexual Abuse Exploitation and Abuse efficiently.
- Lack of judges specialized in the examination of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and lack of mandatory training for justice stakeholders on these topics. Any interested judge may attend training on

the examination of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, the participation being on a voluntary basis.

- Lack of national standards regarding the operation of specially arranged rooms to conduct child-friendly hearings. Even though many of them were established nationwide in courts, prosecutors' offices and police stations, these do not allow child friendly hearings to be conducted, because children may come into contact with the perpetrator in the hall or some of them do not have appropriate technical and infrastructure conditions.
- Lack of the normative framework regulating the status, responsibilities, organization of interviewer's activity, the training system to certify interviewers, monitor their activity, etc.
- There is a constant need to equip the specialized police unit with new technology and licenses, enabling more efficient investigations. Another challenge is related to the funding needed to cover the costs for technological tools and licenses, as all of these were purchased with the support of international organizations and external funding, depending on the agenda of donors.
- There is no formalized procedure for selecting priority cases, or for risk and needs assessment implemented by police.



SECTOR 3: VICTIM SUPPORT AND EMPOWERMENT

Appropriate support services for children and adolescents.

Children and adolescents have access to services that support them through the investigation and prosecution of crimes committed against them. They have access to shelter, specialized medical and psychological services, rehabilitation, repatriation, and social reinsertion services.

CAPACITY 7: End to End Support

To provide planned, integrated, multi-stakeholder support to victims and survivors. Services are inclusive and sensitive to age, gender, sexuality, disability, and ethnicity. Psychological support is also provided through law enforcement, front-line workers that have access to image databases, child protection workforce, and hotlines.

FINDINGS:

- A promising practice mentioned by professionals participating in interviews is the functioning of the Barnahus model in Moldova. Barnahus services for child victims and witnesses of violence are generally defined as a child-friendly, safe environment for children, bringing together relevant services under one roof for the purposes of providing the child with a coordinated and effective response and for preventing re-traumatization during investigation and court proceedings. The central goal is to coordinate in parallel the criminal and child welfare investigations. A key role of the service is to help produce valid evidence for judicial proceedings and provide children with support and assistance, including medical and therapeutic evaluation and treatment.
- Currently, the Barnahus Center functioning in Balti covers the Northern region of Moldova. Two other centers have been planned to be developed in the Southern region and in the Center of Moldova. The budget allocated by the state covers about 50% of the total budget needed to ensure the functionality of the service. Currently, the Service is co-financed with the support of development partners. At the national level, rehabilitation programs for victims of sexual violence and long-term psychological counseling are still lacking.

CAPACITY 8: Child Protection Workforce

To have available personnel that is specialized and trained, coordinated, and available to provide trauma-informed support to protect and support children and adolescents at risk of online CSEA. To have guidelines for front-line professionals on emerging and complex issues, such as “self-generated” CSAM

FINDINGS:

- Government Decision No 270/2014 regulates the identification, evaluation, referral, assistance and monitoring of children victims and potential victims of violence, neglect, exploitation, and trafficking. It sets the basis for the cooperation of multidisciplinary teams consisting of police, health professionals, education staff, and social protection professionals in ensuring a complex response including an integrated intervention plan coordinated and monitored by the case manager.
- A practical Guideline for the implementation of the Intersectoral Coordination Mechanism (Government Decision no. 270/2014) was approved in 2021 through an interministerial order by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Ministry of Education and Research. The Guideline reflects the coordination between actors from police, health, child protection, and education. It includes an explanation of actions that should be conducted by child protection professionals at the request of criminal investigators, such as participation in the forensic examination, development of psychological evaluation reports, and participation at the hearing of the child to avoid their revictimization.
- In practice, the intersectoral cooperation mechanism in cases of sexual abuse and exploitation is deficient due to several factors. The existing stereotypes among professionals create impediments in reporting cases to local authorities as there is no certainty regarding the protection of information reported to these. There is a low capacity of social assistance services in identifying OCSEA cases and reporting these to the police.
- One of the gaps identified by professionals is the lack of clear stipulations in Government Decision no 270/2014 regarding online sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as the lack of indicators enabling the identification of these cases and further interventions. Moreover, professionals are lacking systematic training programs for social protection professionals regarding intervention in cases of online sexual exploitation and abuse. The notification sheet should be adapted by including specific information regarding OCSEA.



CAPACITY 9: Compensation, remedies and complaints arrangements

Provide measures to enable child victims to receive accessible support in compensation, legal remedies, and grievance procedures.

FINDINGS:

- The Law no. 137/2016 regulated minimum legal requirements for ensuring minimum conditions for the rehabilitation of victims of crimes, as well as for the protection and respect of rights and legal interests of victims. According to this law, the victims of crimes, including child victims of Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, should benefit from the following support services:
 - a. Information counseling regarding their rights and available services
 - b. Psychological counseling
 - c. State guaranteed legal assistance
 - d. Financial compensation by the State of the damage cause by the crime
- The national law regulates the possibility for CSEA victims and their guardians/caregivers to request the compensation for material or moral damage caused by the abuser. The compensation may be requested in criminal or civil proceedings, and should be approved and determined by the court. Furthermore, the law sets a state compensatory fund and mechanism to ensure that all victims of CSEA benefit from mandatory state compensation.
- Moldova has procedures in place to ensure the identification, assessment, referral, assistance, and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of violence, neglect, exploitation, and trafficking (Government Decision no 270 of 08.04.2014). In addition,

in 2022, the Government approved the Program for the Creation and Development of the National Referral Mechanism for the Protection and Assistance of Victims of Crime for 2022-2026. Following the norms of the European law, the identification and access of victims of crime to assistance and support will be gradually reorganized so that it does not depend on their participation in the criminal process. At the same time, in order to ensure the realization of the victims' rights to justice, their participation in the criminal process will be promoted by granting access to additional free services, such as: qualified legal assistance in the criminal process, psychological counseling and other services provided by the Criminal Procedure Code. However, the problem identified is the lack of specialized services for victims of CSEA and long-term rehabilitation services at national and local level.

- A legal initiative is planned to improve the legal mechanism ensuring the rehabilitation and compensation for victims of crimes and reducing the deficiencies identified in the implementation of the Law no. 137/2016 regarding the rehabilitation of victims of crime.

CAPACITY 10: Child Helpline

To have a helpline accessible to all children under the age of 18, nationwide, which is free of charge, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by voice and text, offering confidential support and advice with appropriate referral mechanisms. Robust systems for data protection and counselors with specific training on online damages.

FINDINGS:

- The National Child Helpline 116 111 was launched in Moldova on June 4, 2014. The national phone service which is functioning 24/7, is managed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and implemented by the National Center for Training, Assistance, Counseling and Education of Moldova (CNFACEM) NGO. The Child Helpline is providing services for children who need psycho-emotional counseling in crisis situations, for parents and caregivers, as well as for adults willing to report a child abuse case.
- The Child Helpline 116 111 in Moldova provides free phone counseling and online counseling via the chat available on the following website <https://telefonulcopilului.md/>. Once a presumed case of abuse is identified, the Child Helpline counselors will refer the case to relevant authorities and child protection professionals. The counselors are psychologists who have been trained on Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. With the support of development partners, the staff of the Child Helpline benefits from supervision and ongoing capacity building.
- A dedicated online helpline www.siguronline.md providing counseling on issues related to child safety online is also operating in Moldova. The online helpline provides online counseling via chat, and once presumed OSCEA cases are identified, the helpline refers these to police and other services based on identified needs. The counselors are also psychologists trained on online safety and child sexual exploitation and abuse, particularly online. [Www.-siguronline.md](http://www.siguronline.md) is cooperating with the National Child Helpline, ensuring the referral of cases if a case of abuse committed offline is identified. The online helpline is part of the Better Internet for Kids Platform, participating in the Safer Internet Center Plus Project, funded by the European Commission.



MAIN GAPS - SECTOR # 3 VICTIM SUPPORT AND EMPOWERMENT.

- Risk assessments and support plans implemented by multidisciplinary teams are not adapted for OSCEA cases.
- There is poor cooperation between police and the social system to ensure a fully integrated plan to support the victim through the investigation and legal proceedings.
- Also lacking is a systematic training program for professionals mandated to respond to CSEA, (education staff, social workers, frontline police, medical staff, etc.) including online regarding effective intervention in these categories of cases, risk assessments, support plans, etc.
- Specialized services for victims providing long-term rehabilitation services at national and local levels are lacking.
- One of the gaps identified by professionals is the lack of clear stipulations in Government Decision no 270/2014 regarding OCSEA, as well as the lack of indicators enabling the identification of these cases and further interventions. Moreover, professionals are lacking systematic training programs for social protection professionals, regarding intervention in OSCEA cases. The notification sheet should be adapted, by including specific information regarding OCSEA.
- The legal mechanism ensuring the rehabilitation and compensation for victims of crimes stipulated in the Law no. 137/2016 regarding the rehabilitation of victims of crime is deficient and needs improvement.





SECTOR 4: SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Child sexual abuse is prevented

Children and adolescents are informed and empowered to protect themselves from CSEA. Mothers, fathers, caregivers, teachers, and childcare professionals are better prepared to keep minors safe from CSEA, including addressing the taboos that revolve around sexual abuse.

CAPACITY 11: Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Hotline

To have a dedicated portal or reporting hotline for the public to report suspected cases of online CSEA. This line must work cooperatively with law enforcement and the technology industry.

FINDINGS:

- On April 25, 2023, Moldova's provisional membership to the International Network of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE) was approved. The national hotline is available on www.siguronline.md, a specialized portal providing information about child safety online, managed by the International Center La Strada in Moldova. According to the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the General Police Inspectorate and La Strada, the analysts are allowed to receive, assess, classify, notify the hosting companies, and refer illegal materials to police for further investigations. The analysts will

be trained by INHOPE and INTERPOL, and will work closely with police. The first awareness raising campaign aimed at promoting the national hotline for reporting child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) is planned at the beginning of 2024, and will be implemented by La Strada, in cooperation with national stakeholders.

- Following the launch of the hotline Siguronline, standard operational protocols should be developed to regulate the cooperation between police, service providers, and La Strada regarding the reporting, assessment, and removal of CSAM. As well, the reporting mechanism and cooperation with the industry should be expanded to Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and telecommunication companies. Currently, the cooperation of the hotline with the industry is limited to hosting companies, due to the legal framework which should be reviewed. Legislative changes should be operated in Law no. 20/2009, art. 7 para. 1, lit. e/1, to provide greater clarity on the conditions under which service providers must stop access to IP addresses containing illegal content.



CAPACITY 12: Education Programmes

To have a national education program (including age-appropriate, accessible, and inclusive content) to raise awareness on all forms of CSEA, empowering children, adolescents, mothers, fathers, guardians, caregivers, and professionals with relevant information. Systematic training for professionals in the fields of education, social assistance, and health.

FINDINGS:

- In the last few years, the national curriculum was revised to include specific topics related to CSEA. The protection of the life and health of pupils is included as one of the key priorities to be reflected in the framework of the primary, secondary, and high school education. The education institutions are required to involve pupils, teachers and parents in activities aimed at preventing violence against children and encourage the reporting of cases of abuse, violence, and child neglect. Moreover, the school administration is encouraged to involve all the employees in activities aimed at preventing violence against children. All schools should respect the Procedure for Institutional Organization and Intervention of Education for Staff in Cases of Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation, and Child Trafficking, approved by MER order no. 77 of 22.02.2013.
- The administration of educational institutions and all employees will resolve cases of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and child trafficking in cooperation with other institutions and community services, in accordance with the provisions of the intersectoral cooperation mechanism for the identification, assessment, referral, assistance and monitoring of children – victims and potential victims of violence, neglect, exploitation, and trafficking, approved by the Government Decision no. 270 of 08.04.2014.
- The measures ensuring the protection of children from online abuse, including sexual abuse and exploitation, are widely detailed in the MER Order no. 985 of 07.10.2022 regarding the approval of the Standards for school on the protection and safety of children/pupils online. The Standards are setting actions and next steps to be implemented by the management of education institutions, actions to improve the institutional capacity and actions regarding the educational process/curriculum. In addition, the subject of preventing online sexual abuse of children is also covered in the online education program <http://educatieonline.md/> in the form of a digital library and video recorded lessons. The service was launched in 2021 and is delivered by Chisinau City Hall in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research.
- The NGO “CNPAC” - National Center for Child Abuse Prevention is promoting, since 2015, with the support of the Council of Europe (CoE), the brochure “Kiko and the Hand” which is dedicated to preventing child abuse of children from the earliest age. The brochure explains the rule “No touching is allowed” accessible to young children. It can be used by parents/ educators to teach children on how to make the distinction between the allowed and the forbidden touching to prevent sexual abuse. In 2019, CNPAC continued to consolidate the capacities of the education system for the application of this curriculum through the piloting of a program on continuous training for teaching staff, educators, methodologists from the early education



institutions, which include “Kiko and the Hand.” In 2019, the first training of trainers “Kiko and the Hand” was organized for 23 pre-school teachers from 18 kindergartens from Moldova, using the messages and instruments from the “Nobody touches here” Campaign. This training course is replicated in order to cover a bigger number of professionals from the early education system.

- Prevention campaigns are implemented with the support of NGOs. An annual campaign is implemented in February, on the occasion of Safer Internet Day. The Safer Internet Day Committee in Moldova (La Strada) implements the campaign in partnership with national stakeholders (Ministry of Education, General Inspectorate of Police, private ICT sector, and others). On this occasion, the general public, children, and/or parents are informed about specific risks that may occur online, trends related to online child sexual exploitation, and available services to report these cases. In recent years, no other specific campaigns were implemented regarding other forms of CSEA.
- The campaigns implemented to raise awareness about online child sexual exploitation included information on the characteristics and particularities of online sexual violence and aggressors. Campaigns implemented to raise awareness about OSCEA are countering cultural practices, stereotypes, and social norms.

CAPACITY 13: Child Participation

To develop scenarios where children and adolescents are encouraged and empowered to state ideas and to influence policies and practices related to CSEA. Child protection, child rights frameworks and trauma-informed practices are used in engaging them.

FINDINGS:

- Law No. 215/2016 on youth promotes youth participation in the decision-making process. The state ensures the participation of young people in the decision-making process by supporting the creation of the participation structures of young people at national and local levels, their financing within the limits of available budgets; the involvement of young people in the process of elaborating, making and implementing decisions; and the development of the network of peer-to-peer educators in different fields concerning young people.

The participation of young people in decision making is also promoted by the National Youth Sector Development Strategy 2020 and is included in the newly drafted Strategy for the Development of Youth Sector for Years 2022-2030 “Youth 2030” and the corresponding action plan. The National Youth Council of Moldova has developed in 2019, in cooperation with the UNICEF, a guide for youth participation in the community.

One of the most recent examples of child participation was the contribution of children and adolescents from the Republic of Moldova to the second monitoring round of the Lanzarote Committee on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by information and communication technologies. The report



submitted by children contain information on three topics:

- Whether the national curriculum helps children learn how to cope with the risks of producing, receiving or distributing sexual images, videos and texts.
- The quality and effect of awareness raising/educational activities aimed for children, parents and professionals about potential risks when producing, receiving or distributing images, videos and texts with sexual character.
- How existing mechanisms of reporting and psychological assistance work for children, victims of online sexual exposure.

CAPACITY 14: Offender prevention and support systems.

To have support programs in place to prevent persons with a sexual interest in minors under the age of 18 from abusing or accessing CSAM, support for convicted offenders as part of the rehabilitation response, and specialized support for minors who display harmful sexual behaviors.

FINDINGS:

- At the national level, there are four centers providing assistance and counseling for family aggressors; however, these are not providing services for child sex offenders. The Centers are working on the basis of the Government Decision no. 496 of 30.06.2014, which approved the Framework Regulation for the organization and operation of the Center and the minimum quality standards with the curriculum that is based on the Duluth (USA) model. The Centers provide assistance and counseling services for perpetrators twice per week. The recommended duration for the sessions is 35 sessions (five individual sessions and 30 group sessions).
- Currently, the National Probation Inspectorate does not implement programs for the prevention of CSEA or recidivism among sexual perpetrators, nor assistance

programs that provide psychological counseling to child sex offenders. The National Probation Inspectorate (NPI) is implementing national programs aimed at reducing the aggressivity among youth, and programs for the rehabilitation of family aggressors.

- The NPI requested the support of the partners for the development of the following tools and resources:
 - Guidelines for the probation officers working with children who committed sex crimes (rape, sexual harassment, etc.), including working methods and techniques.
 - Development of a cognitive-behavioral program for young people in conflict with the law in order to combat violence, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation of minors (for young people convicted of such crimes, aimed at preventing recidivism).
 - Didactic materials for the prevention/awareness in educational institutions, especially on topics about sexual abuse and exploitation, including in the online environment.
 - Parenting education materials.

CAPACITY 15: Informed and ethical media reporting

Sensitive, evidence-based reports and publications that respect the rights and dignity of victims and survivors.

FINDINGS:

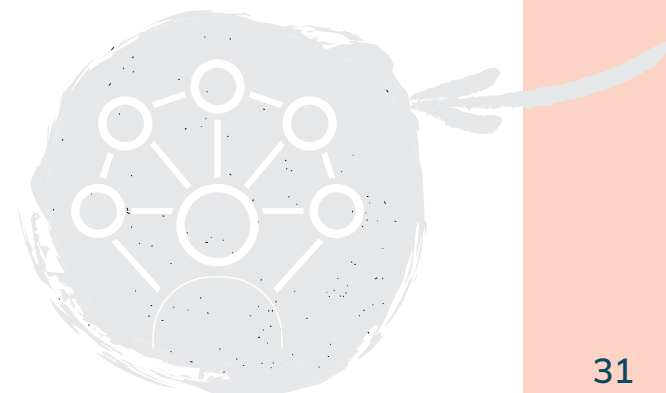
- Guidelines and recommendations were developed for mass media regarding the protection of children's rights in their journalistic actions. The Press Council developed the following guidelines: (1) how to protect the image of children in journalism subjects with a negative connotation; (2) the specific press reflection of subjects regarding violence against children. UNICEF developed a guide with good practices regarding reflections with and about children. All of these provide specific recommendations regarding the approach to sexual abuse cases, case studies, examples of good practices, and answers to the frequently asked questions regarding the reflection of topics concerning children.

MAIN GAPS - SECTOR # 4 SOCIETY AND CULTURE.

- Reporting mechanisms and cooperation with ISPs and telecommunication companies for ensuring the notice and takedown of child sexual abuse materials are lacking.
- Prevention campaigns on CSEA, including online, are conducted sporadically, with the support of NGOs, depending on external funding provided by development partners. The campaigns are usually implemented in Romanian and Russian and do not cover another linguistic minority, such as Ukrainian or Gagauz. Most of these are implemented via schools or widely promoted online and do not reach local vulnerable communities.
- There are no functional services for child sex offenders aimed at preventing recidivism among sexual perpetrators, nor are there assistance programs that provide psychological counseling.
- Probation officers are lacking guidelines on working with children who committed sex crimes, including working methods and techniques.
- Cognitive-behavioral programs for young people in conflict with the law in order to combat violence, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation of minors (for young people convicted of such crimes, aimed at preventing recidivism) are lacking.



- Insufficient didactic materials for the prevention/awareness in educational institutions, especially on topics about sexual abuse and exploitation, including in the online environment.
- Insufficient parenting education materials on topics related to child safety online, sexual abuse and exploitation of children, adapted to children's age.
- No internal instructions were developed for professionals from media, the protection system, police, or prosecutors to promote the use of the appropriate terminology for CSEA cases.





SECTOR 5: INDUSTRY

Private sector committed to developing solutions to prevent and address child sexual abuse

The public can proactively report child sexual abuse crimes. The private sector has the power and willingness to block and remove online child sexual abuse materials and proactively address local child sexual abuse issues.

CAPACITY 16: Takedown procedures and reporting

To have procedures in place for local and timely removal and blocking of CSAM whenever a company confirms its presence. Legal protection for private sector entities to report CSEA, including the transmission of content to law enforcement and other appointed agencies. Global and cross-sectoral collaboration.

FINDINGS:

- Currently, the blocking of some web pages, platforms, applications which are not authorized, is done at the request of authorities (for example – the National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology of the Republic of Moldova), according to national laws (for example: law 291 of 16.12.2016 regarding the organization and conduct of gambling; Provision no. 1 of 24.02.2022 of the Commission for Exceptional Situations of the Republic of Moldova).
- In 2020, Law no. 20-XVI of 03.02.2009 on preventing and combating cybercrime was completed with art. 7 letter e1. regarding the elimination and blocking the access to criminal content which is also attributed to the materials that represent sexual exploitation of the child. According to the law, service providers are obliged to stop in accordance with the law, using the methods and technical means in their possession, the access from their own computer systems to all IP addresses on which web pages are located, including those hosted by the respective provider, which contribute to the commission of crimes or violation of the provisions of the legislation in force, or contain/disseminate instructions on how to commit them. Unfortunately, this rule is a reference (blanket) rule, according to which the suspension of access takes place under the conditions of the law, while another rule that would enforce its provisions does not exist. Thus, Internet service providers, faced with a legislative vacuum, are unable to apply the norm stipulated above.
- According to Law no 284/2004 regarding electronic commerce, art. 15 para 1, the service provider is not responsible for the information transmitted through the electronic communications network. Moreover, the service provider is not responsible for the automatic, intermediate, and temporary storage of the transmitted information and should act promptly to take down the information which has been stored or to block access to it, as soon as it becomes aware that the access to this information transmitted was removed, the access to it was blocked or a public authority has authorized the removal or blocking of the information. The industry does not have the obligation to check or monitor the content that is shared or stored on their servers, as it is considered an intrusion into privacy and a limitation of the freedom of expression.
- The national legislation stipulates that hosting companies are not responsible for the information

stored on their servers, except in cases when the service provider knows that the activity or the stored information is illegal or is aware of circumstances indicating that the activity of the information is illegal.

- Once the hosting company is informed about the illegal activity or information stored on its servers, it is obliged to act promptly to take down or block access to it. The service provider may be informed about the illegal content stored on their servers via:
 - a written motion from a court or a public authority that states the illegal character of the information or the activity stored on the servers of the service provider
 - a written notice (in original) from an interested person, who declares on their own responsibility that an activity or information which is stored on the servers of the service provider is illegal
- ISPs and hosting companies are obliged to inform the Ministry of Internal Affairs about grooming or CSAM conducted through the provided services.
- Similarly, at the request of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Information and Security Service, and the General Prosecutor's Office, the service providers are obliged to provide information enabling the identification of users, recipients of the services with which these providers have concluded contracts regarding the permanent storage of information. This information may be requested only if they have evidence that leads to the conclusion that services offered by the provider are used to carry out illegal activities.
- According to national ISPs, the Content Delivery Network (CDN) operators and unauthorized hosting companies should get more involved in procedures to block and take down child sexual abuse materials.
- According to the Electronic Commerce Law no. 284/2004, art. 25 par. (1) providers that offer Internet access services or permanent information storage services have the obligation to make available to the public an easily accessible and visible tool that allows any person to report crimes, such as CSAM (art. 208/1

CC). The service providers are obliged to promptly communicate to the competent public authority about the illegal activities that are carried out by the recipients of the services, through these services, after such information is reported to them. The service providers are obliged to communicate this information to authorized public authorities (such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Information and Security Service, or the General Prosecutor's Office).

- In line with the legal requirements, ISPs developed webpages to enable the reporting of crimes, including the reporting of CSAM. However, the ICT companies do not have the right to analyze the registered reports or to assess the materials. They are automatically referring all registered reports to police. An example mentioned by one of the telecommunication companies is the website <https://www.orange.md/ro/notifica-o-infractiune>, developed by Orange Moldova to report any crimes, including CSEA identified through the services provided by Orange Moldova.
- Moldcell is promoting a whistleblowing reporting system, available for any ethical misconduct or crimes, which are not related to commercial complaints. The email whistleblowing@moldcell.md allows individuals to report violations of internal regulations and/or legal provisions which are treated confidentially. This tool could be used to report child abuse materials, which can later be sent to competent legal authorities for investigation. The email is publicly available on the website of the company, in the section dedicated to "reporting irregularities" and in the contacts section.
- The industry in Moldova does not deploy any tools to detect illegal content and behaviors. Even if the ICT companies usually respond at the request of police, they are not taking any extra measures to combat OSCEA. Companies do not have security by-design policies or other guidelines aimed at combatting illegal content online.
- No specific tools are implemented to identify and report CSAM, and the responsibility regarding the



legality of the published or distributed content is totally assumed by the clients (the owners of the content).

- The industry has general support and complaint procedures, allowing users to report any kind of concern. No private company was identified as having national technological solutions which would allow identifying, preventing, or investigating CSAM.

CAPACITY 17: Innovative solution development

To create technological solutions to prevent and address OCSEA.

FINDINGS:

- Internet access providers are limited in the possibility of implementing technological solutions in the network to identify cases of abuse and sexual exploitation of children, because providers cannot on their own apply Internet traffic management measures. In accordance with the Electronic Communications Law no. 241/2007 art. 20 point (2/3) "Internet access service providers have the obligation not to apply traffic management measures that exceed the measures provided for in paragraph (2/2), and in particular, not to block, not to slow down, not to modify, not to restrict, not to interfere, not to alternate and to process without discrimination certain content, certain applications or services or certain categories of them, except in cases where this is necessary and only for as long as necessary:
 - a. to comply with the legislation in force or the measures intended to implement the legislation in force, including court decisions or acts of competent public authorities
 - b. to maintain the integrity and security of the network, the services provided through that network and the end users'

terminal equipment

- c. to avoid imminent network congestion and/or mitigate the effects of temporary or exceptional network congestion, provided that equivalent categories of traffic are managed equally
- As mentioned by several ISPs, no companies in Moldova have developed technological solutions aiming at identifying, preventing, investigating cases of CSEA. ISPs mentioned their previous experience in providing end users with instructions on activating parental control for Android, Apple or Windows devices, offering parents the opportunity to protect their children, including filtering the content from the Internet.
 - The budget covering the security of information, the infrastructure resilience and specific services (such as SafeWeb) covers activities related to the prevention and protection of children against sexual abuse and exploitation, or combatting CSAM.
 - Moreover, Moldcell company allocates a dedicated budget for the prevention and protection of children from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation and combating CSAM. In this regard, Moldcell recently signed a memorandum of collaboration with the La Strada International Center to promote children's rights and safety in the virtual world.

CAPACITY 18: Responsible Business Conduct

Private sector entities have policies on child protection and safeguarding, due diligence, and remediation that address OCSEA.

FINDINGS:

- Private ICT companies included the security of their clients, adults, and children in their social responsibility policies. However, these policies are not mandatory, and the topic is perceived as optional, being the mandate and

responsibility of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) department, not of the entire company. In some cases, the staff of one private ICT company was not even aware if their CSR policy reflects child safety online measures. Nevertheless, some good examples of ICT sector involvement in preventing online risks were identified, such as conducting awareness-raising events about child safety online or digital education and coding/robotics for children.

- The industry has various social responsibility policies aiming to promote the safe use of the Internet. For example, Moldtelecom is applying SafeWeb, the service which provides safe access to the Internet, and may block the websites with obscene content, phishing websites, or virus-infected content.
- Orange Moldova has created a page with tips about online safety, their volunteers are conducting workshops on child safety online, and they are implementing #supercoders, a program aimed at teaching young users about responsible and safe use of the Internet.
- Digital responsibility is the joint social responsibility strategy of the Moldcell company, which is implementing the following measures:
 - Online safety for children, teenagers, and parents: The educational project #InternetFărăGriji launched by Moldcell in partnership with the La Strada International Center and Tekwill Academy Kids and publicized throughout the country. During the pandemic, the project continued in online format, via weekly Facebook Lives. In 2022, it launched an educational and interactive platform about online safety. The platform has useful content with questions and answers, quizzes for children of different ages to test their knowledge and earn points. In parallel, Moldcell signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, the Moldovan Competitiveness Project financed by USAID and the private sector. The Internet Fara Griji project and the recently launched platform claims to provide every child, teacher, and/or parent with the necessary information to make the Internet accessible and safe.

- Responsible Gaming and eSports Moldcell promotes a balanced approach between real and virtual life, based on respecting age restrictions, principles of non-discrimination, goodwill, and parental involvement
- Technical solutions for children's online safety

MAIN GAPS - SECTOR # 5 INDUSTRY.

- Clear procedures and mechanisms for the take down or blocking of child sexual abuse materials from the Internet, by ISP and other ICTs companies are lacking.
- A national procedure that obliges national Internet service providers to block CSAM from being accessed while it is being removed from international companies' servers is absent. The blocking of illegal content is conducted at the request of authorities (Information and Security Service, National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology, or police).
- The country does not have national technological solutions that would allow the identification, prevention or investigation of CSEA;
- No private company was identified as having national technological solutions which would allow identifying, preventing, or investigating CSAM.
- The national industry does not have tools to identify and report CSAM, as national ISPs do not have access to the content of users and may apply filtering only on the reported resources. The responsibility regarding the legality of the published or distributed content is totally assumed by the clients (the owners of the content).
- Companies do not have security by-design policies or other guidelines aimed at combating illegal content online.





SECTOR 6: RESEARCH AND DATA

Awareness-raising among the public, professionals, and policymakers

Potential future offenders are deterred. Child sexual abuse offenses and recidivism are reduced.

CAPACITY 19: Research and Data

The country has the data, research, and analyses on the threat and response to OCSEA. Robust administrative data systems (e.g., police, courts, social services) to monitor service delivery, access, and effectiveness, and to provide periodic information to decision makers.

FINDINGS:

- During the past few years, research was conducted with the support of civil society and international partners to support the development and improvement of the national response to OCSEA.
- The “Child Safety Online Research Regarding the Online Experiences of Children from Moldova and Risks to which They are Exposed”⁵ is the latest research conducted by the International Center La Strada during 2021, showing representative data regarding the access of children from Moldova to the Internet, the practices and abilities of children online, online risks, vulnerabilities, and protection factors of children from online risks. The research was conducted with the support of the Ministry of Education and Research.

- The Voices of Survivors research project implemented during 2021 aimed to explore OSCEA in six countries, including Moldova. The research project was undertaken by WeProtect Global Alliance, ECPAT International, and International Centre La Strada Moldova as part of the Voices of Survivors project.⁶ Presenting the perspectives of young survivors within the research was paramount for national strategies, policy and action by duty-bearers, service providers, and law enforcement. The research was conducted with the support of local authorities and of Directions for Social Protection, and the Directions for Child Protection.
- The “Republic of Moldova Violence against Children and Youth” Survey, conducted during 2019, was a broader survey reflecting statistics regarding all the forms of violence children from Moldova have experienced. It includes quantitative and qualitative data about sexual violence experienced by children and youngsters, prevalence of different types of sexual violence prior to the age 18, data about perpetrators, location of first incident of sexual violence, and other relevant data.⁷ The former Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection (currently – the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection) was the lead Ministry conducting the research. Similarly, for the purpose of the research, a multi-sectoral task force with representatives of

⁵ https://lastrada.md/pic/uploaded/Studiu_Siguranta_online-comportamente_si_riscuri-FINAL.pdf

⁶ https://lastrada.md/pic/uploaded/Publicatii_2021/04-11-2021Moldova_National%20Report_EN_FINAL.PDF

⁷ https://ms.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/OIM_MoldovaVACS2019_EN_interactive3-1.pdf

relevant ministries and civil society organization was created, a sociological company was involved as an implementing agency. Experts from the United States Agency for International Development, U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the International Organization for Migration were also involved in the process.

- Explanatory and qualitative research was also conducted on various aspects:
 - Child Safety Online in Republic of Moldova. Analysis of legislation, policies, practices for the prevention, identification, reporting, and removal of Child Sexual Abuse Materials (conducted by Council of Europe, 2023);
 - Judicial practice analysis of cases of online child sexual exploitation and abuse (conducted by the International Center La Strada, 2023);
 - Analysis of educational policies and practices related to child safety online (conducted by the International Center La Strada, 2020);
 - Public policies research on child safety online. How can the state response be improved in order to prevent and combat the online sexual abuse of children? (conducted by the International Center La Strada, 2020); and others.
- Situational and gap analysis to assess the country's progress on the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention was conducted in 2017 by the International Center La Strada.⁸ Following the recommendation provided by La Strada for the development of indicators to ensure the monitoring of the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention, with the support of the Council of Europe, the framework of indicators was developed, serving as a working tool for the Lanzarote Commission – the governmental entity which consists of representatives of public authorities and other partners: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, General Police Inspectorate, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, etc. The Commission operates as a national platform for a multi-stakeholder dialogue on

measures implemented by national authorities related to the prevention and protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation. Ongoing support is needed to ensure the functionality of the Secretariat of the Commission, as well as to advance their work in ensuring the operationalization of developed indicators for the monitoring of the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention.

CAPACITY 20: Universally agreed terminology

Clearly communicated information and policies that are aligned with international standards.

FINDINGS:

- There are no internal instructions regarding the appropriate terminology to be used for CSEA. The protection system, police, and prosecutors use the terminology from the normative or legal framework – abuse, violence, exploitation. However, in cases of OSCEA, the legislation incriminates child pornography and the term is still used by professionals when referring to CSAM.

MAIN GAPS - SECTOR # 6 RESEARCH AND DATA

- Lack of state led research and available statistics provided by law enforcement on OCSEA.
- Professionals are operating with the legal terminology in terms of sexual abuse and exploitation, including online, which is not in line with the international standards agreed in the Luxembourg guidelines.
- No internal instructions were developed for professionals from media, the protection system, police, or prosecutors to promote the use of the appropriate terminology for CSEA cases.

⁸ https://lastrada.md/files/resources/3/raport_en_1_.pdf

RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS - SECTOR # 1: POLICY, LEGISLATION AND GOVERNANCE

Short Term

- Develop and approve -- by the end of 2023 -- a National Action Plan on Child Safety Online, covering comprehensive measures for the protection of children from OSCEA, in line with the Model National Response developed by WeProtect Global Alliance.
- Ensure the functionality of the Secretariat of the National Lanzarote Commission and advance their work in ensuring the operationalization of developed indicators for the monitoring of the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention.
- The new concept of the law on children rights, aimed at reviewing the Law 338/1994 should integrate the recommendations provided by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in the general comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment.

Medium Term

- Develop the normative framework enabling effective cooperation of law enforcement with ISPs, for notice and takedown of CSAM, in line with European standards.
- Approve legal amendments aimed at aligning the national criminal law with the Lanzarote Convention and European Directive on combatting CSEA, with a special focus on criminalization of offences concerning the participation of a child in "pornographic" performances and individualized punishment for each of the actions concerning "child pornography," taking into account the level of social danger (producing, offering or making available, distributing or transmitting, procuring, possessing, or knowingly obtaining access).

Long Term

- Develop an updated explanatory decision and guidelines regarding the interpretation and implementation of the new legal framework criminalizing sexual violence, available for legal professionals, law enforcement, and justice stakeholders.



RECOMMENDATIONS - SECTOR # 2: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Short Term

- Conduct a functional analysis of law enforcement dealing with OCSEA cases, to assess the institutional capacity and functional systemic needs for the investigation and prosecution of these cases and needs for equipment with new technology and licenses, enabling a more efficient investigation.
- Conduct a qualitative analysis on the national judicial practice of child trafficking and other related crimes, including online child sexual exploitation to assess the impact the specialization of judges had on the quality of court examinations, and the international best practices related to training and specialization of courts on these issues.
- Include in the training program for police and prosecutors topics related to the evaluation of risks and needs of children victims of OCSEA, prioritization of cases and safety plans adapted for online crimes.

Medium Term

- Taking into account the expansion of use of ICTs in committing online sexual abuse towards children, it is necessary to ensure training for local police on the investigation of cases of sexual violence, with a special focus on child-oriented investigations, and risk assessment in cases of OCSEA.
- In the context of the latest legal amendments to the law regarding the hearing of children under special conditions (art. 110/1 CCP), develop the normative framework regulating the status, responsibilities, organization of interviewer's activity, the training system, and the compensation of interviewers.

Long Term

- Develop a national sex offender registry in line with international best practices for monitoring and tracking sex offenders following their release into the community.
- Conduct training for professionals in penitentiaries to implement programs for the rehabilitation of sex offenders in all penitentiaries adapted to the national context and validated for local population.
- Develop the capacities of the National Probation Inspectorate, and provide resources and guidelines for probation officers



RECOMMENDATIONS - SECTOR # 3 VICTIM SUPPORT AND EMPOWERMENT.

Short Term

- Review the Government Decision no 270/2014 and the notification sheet by including OCSEA as a distinct category of abuse, and develop indicators enabling the identification of these cases and further interventions.

Medium Term

- Adapt risk assessment and support plans implemented by multidisciplinary teams to OCSEA cases.
- Advance with the amendments proposed for the Law no. 137/2016 regarding the rehabilitation of victims of crime, to eliminate the deficiencies and ensure effective rehabilitation and compensation of victims of crimes.

Long Term

- Conduct systematic training programs for professionals mandated to respond to CSEA, including online (education staff, social workers, frontline police, medical staff, etc.) regarding effective intervention in these categories of cases, risk assessments, support plans, etc.



RECOMMENDATIONS - SECTOR # 4 SOCIETY AND CULTURE.

Short Term

- Develop robust and standardized processes for receiving, prioritizing, actioning, and referring reports received via the hotline, formally agreed upon with police and ISPs.
- Promote the national hotline for reporting child sexual abuse materials in awareness-raising campaigns targeting the general public to provide clear and accessible means for reporting illegal content found on the Internet and constantly share data regarding the CSAM reported online and actions taken to remove these from the Internet.
- Expand the implementation of Safer Internet School Standards at the national level, by ensuring the full set of resources, informational materials, training, and tools to contribute to a safer experience of children in the online environment.
- Develop didactic materials and information resources for the prevention/awareness in educational institutions, especially on topics about sexual abuse and exploitation, including in the online environment, adapted to children's age.

Medium Term

- Include the topic related to child safety online in the continuous training program for school staff to achieve a higher number of teachers trained on how to conduct prevention activities on topics related to OCSEA, as well as to improve their capacities to identify and effectively respond to these cases in cooperation with other professionals.
- Conduct thematic awareness raising campaigns focused on risks of CSEA and risks of OCSEA, aiming to trigger attitude change, combating stereotypes, and mobilizing society for the immediate reporting of cases to available helplines or hotline.
- Encourage youth participation by organizing youth led events and working with youth centers, and involve Children's Councils in deciding on measures and in conducting awareness raising activities in schools with their peers.
- Design a comprehensive parenting education program on topics related to child safety online, sexual abuse, and exploitation of children, and ensure further implementation through a trained network of facilitators at the local level, working with schools and at the community level.
- Regularly carrying out thematic media monitoring on journalistic materials involving children or reflecting the situation of a victim of CSEA, to raise awareness about the harm mass-media may produce if not carrying for the best interest of the child.

Long Term

- Continue further cooperation with the European network of Awareness Centers promoting safer and better use of the Internet, empowering children to use online technologies safely and effectively, for sharing of experiences and best practices, and import best response models.
- Develop services for child sex offenders aimed at preventing recidivism among sexual perpetrators, as well as assistance programs that provide psychological counseling.
- Develop counseling services for potential perpetrators (adults having a sexual interest in children) who did not yet commit sexual crimes.



RECOMMENDATIONS - SECTOR # 5 INDUSTRY.

Short Term

- Develop a road-map with clear measures at the legislative level for relevant Ministries and agencies working on information security, cybersecurity, technology, and the communication sector, regarding the actions which should be taken to improve the industry's framework for response to OCSEA.
- Develop clear procedures and mechanisms for blocking CSAM from being accessed while they are being removed from international companies' servers. The procedure should specify the mandate of authorities, the obligations of ISPs, terms and conditions for blocking CSAM content, and cooperation with Hotlines for that purpose.
- Organize events for decision-makers and public authorities regarding the role of the state in ensuring the effective involvement of the private sector in preventing and combating OCSEA, starting from the commitments assumed by the Republic of Moldova by ratifying the Lanzarote Convention by signing the WeProtect National Response Model and by signing the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) declaration in the field.

Medium Term

- Conduct information and awareness-raising activities for representatives of the private sector regarding the measures to prevent and combat OCSEA that can be undertaken by them and the existing standards in this field.
- Carrying out an in-depth study (mapping) regarding the profile of private companies in the ICT sector in Moldova, the practices of involving the private sector in preventing and combating OCSEA, and the legal framework and the national policy framework, in order to identify gaps and areas for prioritized interventions.
- Operate legislative changes in Law no. 20/2009, art. 7 para. 1, lit. e/1, to provide greater clarity on the conditions under which service providers must stop access to IP addresses containing illegal content.

Long Term

- Promote the development by National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology (ANRCETI) of specific recommendations for the ICT private sector regarding the measures that can be taken by different sectors to prevent and combat online sexual abuse and exploitation of children.
- Involve the association of private ICT companies in promoting the principles of respect for children's rights in the activity of the ICT sector, both when services are provided and in the process of developing new digital products that could be used by children.



RECOMMENDATIONS - SECTOR # 6 DATA AND RESEARCH

Medium Term

- Develop internal instructions or guidelines regarding the recommended terminology used for CSEA cases, promoting a child-centered approach, avoiding blaming, and promoting respect for children's rights.

Long Term

- Encourage state-led research on trends and issues related to OCSEA, vulnerability factors, prevalence of risks, modus operandi, and national response to the threat. Conduct research on the current institutional response, review and evaluate the implementation of applicable legislation and policies, review the current ICT ecosystem response, including Hotline reporting mechanisms and industry engagement, and map the activity of other stakeholders engaged in this issue.
- Ensure inter-operability of data collection systems to provide public data regarding the number of identified and reported cases, number of investigated cases, court decisions, access to services, for a clear assessment of the nature and scale of the threat of OCSEA in the country, and serve the purpose of evidence-led policy development.

CONCLUSIONS

In recent years, Moldova has taken important steps to lead and coordinate efforts to end violence affecting children, including the capacities evaluated to prevent and combat CSEA online and offline:

- New commitments taken by the Government in the context of Moldova's candidate status to the European Union to ensure national policies are in line with international standards and European policies.
- Recent reforms to the legislation aimed at improving the legal framework according to the provisions of the Istanbul Convention which led to significant changes in the Criminal Code, Procedural Criminal Code, focused on several areas aimed at ensuring protection of victims of sexual violence.
- The establishment of the national Lanzarote Commission, the governmental entity which consists of representatives of public authorities and other partners: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, General Police Inspectorate, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, etc. The Commission operates as a national platform for a multi-stakeholder dialogue on measures implemented by national authorities related to the prevention and protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation.
- The approval of Moldova's provisional membership to the International Network of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE). The national hotline is available on www.siguronline.md, a specialized portal providing information about child safety online, managed by the International Center La Strada in Moldova.
- Launching of the Barnahus model in Moldova for child victims and witnesses of violence, defined as a child-friendly, safe environment for children, bringing together relevant services under one roof for the purpose of providing the child with a coordinated and effective

response and for preventing re-traumatization during investigation and court proceedings.

Having legislative, public policy, and tools in this area will allow Moldova to advance its response to OCSEA and confront the main challenges, namely:

- High-level commitment to combating CSEA online and offline in developing comprehensive policies and engaging in their implementation.
- Sufficient financial resources for the implementation of national policies aimed at preventing and combating CSEA.
- Qualitative investigations of CSEA online and offline, with a victim-centered response, to avoid further revictimization of children, and enable their rehabilitation by providing an effective intervention.
- Capacity building of professionals from the public and private sector for a common understanding of the issue, and responsibilities per sector for a systemic response of specific risks and needs children may have, and on measures to be taken to respond to these.
- National legal framework adjusted to international standards reflected in international treaties and European Directive.
- Specialized law enforcement equipped with knowledge and technological tools to effectively investigate OCSEA.
- Guidelines and protocols for an efficient cooperation of law enforcement, with the hotline and industry for the removal of CSAM from the Internet in prompt terms.
- Rehabilitation and resocialization programs for perpetrators, to reduce the risks of recidivism, and to prevent the commission of sexual crimes against children.



FINAL REPORT 2023

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Moldova

Joint and coordinated action for the prevention, investigation, and assistance to victims of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse