

THE PERSPECTIVES OF ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA THROUGH ITS INTEGRATION INTO THE NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING SYSTEM

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Abstract. *Gender equality tends to be considered an indicator for developed societies, but developing societies should also provide all the prerequisites (institutional, policy framework, resources, etc.) for achieving this objective. Gender gaps, which are highlighted in the National Development Strategy (NDS) – long visionary development document of the Republic of Moldova, adopted at the end of 2022, were analyzed in terms of the causes, but also the factors that determine them. However, the causes of gender inequalities in education, access to infrastructure, utilities, fair retirement pensions, human security have been omitted in the NDS. There are no records on the level of representation in public consultations of men and women. The version of the NDS adopted by the Government integrates aspects related to the gender perspective to a greater extent than the version of the document, placed for consultations on July 26, 2022 (which only analyzed the gaps in the incomes between women and men). Even if in the analysis of the situation the gender dimension is integrated to a more limited extent, then in the part of objectives, targets and policy directions (Results Framework), the gender perspective, materialized by reducing inequalities and inequities of opportunities and access to resources between women and men is present in all 10 general objectives.*

Keywords: *gender, gap, strategy, objectives, equality, values, commitments*

Introduction

The adoption and implementation of democratic values and principles, the enshrinement of human rights and the development of human-based policies and their needs are issues of major importance to Moldovan society, and the process of integrating the Republic of Moldova into European Union family is a basic component of the country's development strategy.

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The integration of the Republic of Moldova in modern globalization processes, implementation of political and legal reforms have determined to link gender-based political and economic norms (Putina, Iațco, p.266). On June 23, 2022, the European Council granted the Republic of Moldova the status of candidate country, a decision taken following the elaboration and presentation by the latter, in a record period of less than a month, the answers to the Questionnaire of the European Commission¹, submitted in the context of the Moldova's request for accession to the European Union. Although the answers on the situation of implementation of the reforms in the Republic of Moldova in all socio-economic sectors, as well as those of a political nature, especially after the signing of the *Association Agreement between the European Union, Euratom and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part*², have drawn the Commission's positive opinion, and at the same time the granting by the Council of the status of candidate country, together with Ukraine, they were issued subject to the fulfillment by the institutions of the Republic of Moldova of 9 recommendations, formulated by the European Commission³.

For the effective implementation of the Commission's recommendations, Moldovan authorities, jointly with civil society organizations and business associations have developed and, through the National Commission for European Integration⁴ approved, on August 4, 2022, the Action Plan for the implementation of the measures proposed by the European Commission⁵, which operationalize the above-mentioned recommendations through 60 actions, in an implementation period targeting the horizon of the end of June, 2023. However, in accordance with the statements of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Mr Nicu Popescu, made at the last meeting of the National Commission for European Integration, the full implementation of the action plan is estimated to be completed at the end of March a.c⁶.

Taking into account our topic of interest, through this article, we intend to analyze further, only the ninth condition/recommendation, monitored by the Commission, and which once implemented by the Republic of Moldova, along with others⁷, will serve as a basis for advancing bilateral accession discussions to the Union. Thus, we aim to analyze how and to which extent, the national authorities from Chisinau plan to accomplish the Commission recommendation aimed at ensuring

¹ In April 2022, the Republic of Moldova received the Questionnaire from the European Commission containing 2191 questions: 369 related to political and economic criteria and 1822 grouped in 33 chapters of the EU acquis: <https://mfa.gov.md/ro/content/maeiexplicaderarea-la-ue>.

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:22014A0830%2801%29>

³ https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/opinion-moldovas-application-membership-european-union_en

⁴ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135139&lang=ro#

⁵ https://presedinte.md/app/webroot/uploaded/plan_cnie_04.08.2022.pdf

⁶ https://www.ipn.md/ro/implementarea-celor-9-conditii-ale-comisiei-europene-ar-putea-7965_1094949.html

⁷ Recomandarea nr. 9 din lista recomandărilor formulate de Comisia Europeană în contextul avizului emis pe marginea acordării Republicii Moldova a statului de țară candidată la UE: *Consolidarea protecției drepturilor omului, în special în cazul grupurilor vulnerabile, și punerea în aplicare a angajamentelor de a consolida egalitatea de gen și de a combate violența împotriva femeilor*".

equal opportunities for men and women, by including gender dimension into national system of strategic planning and public policies. It should be noted that, in accordance with the Action Plan for the implementation of the measures proposed by the European Commission, it is stated that, in order to ensure the promotion and implementation of principles related to equal opportunities for women and men to fully harness their potential⁸, the authorities have proposed amending the legal framework in the field of non-discrimination and equality, through following mechanisms and criteria:

- (i) extension the list of non-discrimination criteria;
- (ii) improving data collection on equality, non-discrimination and diversity, monitoring, evaluation and annual reporting of results;
- (iii) strengthening the institutional framework in the field, in order to ensure a better implementation of the principle of equality and non-discrimination.

When referring to gender equality,

In this regard, the authorities from the Republic of Moldova will have to approve a national program on gender equality, which will include measures addressing the reduction of risks associated with inequality in different sectors of socio-economical life, including a separate policy paper to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, which will include measures to fulfill the commitments made under the Istanbul Convention. Being an intersectoral policy area, a fact recognized also by the European Union's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, the measures aiming at ensuring equal opportunities for men and women should be included in other sectoral policy documents proposed by the authorities for implementation in accordance with the mentioned action plan, and here we refer to the: *National employment program*, which aims to strengthen active employment initiatives for the integration into the labor market of people in need of additional employment support; and *Program for supporting the Roma population for the years 2022 – 2025*. In this vein, it is crucial to avoid duplication or overlaps between the measures proposed simultaneously by two or more policy documents.

Planning the implementation of certain actions, regardless of their nature, but for which in order to be carried out, the effort and the use of public resources are conditional, requires the authorities to comply with certain rules and methodologies related to the organization and functioning of the strategic planning system, including public budget planning. Thus, we aim to analyze whether the Moldovan authorities, following the goal of gender mainstreaming in the national policy system, do they consider respecting the strategic planning methodology imposed by the legal and methodological framework currently in place in the Republic of Moldova, mainly: (i) Law no. 100/2017 on normative acts⁹; (ii) Government Decision no. 386/2020 on planning, elaboration, approval, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policy documents; (iii) Methodological guidelines on integrating the provisions of the national development strategy into public policy and planning documents at the national level¹⁰; (iv) Handbook on estimating public policy costs in the Republic of

⁸ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135295&lang=ro#

⁹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=121921&lang=ro

¹⁰ https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/ghid_copertat_coral.pdf

Moldova¹¹. However, the successful implementation of the measures proposed by the authorities, no matter how simple or ambitious and complex they may be, whether they derive from the national public agenda or from internationally assumed commitments, as well as the achievement of the beneficial impact they imply, require as fundamental prerequisites compliance with strategic and budgetary planning rules and techniques.. Otherwise, those measures risk to remain only commitments listed in the policy documents and regulations without being put in place.

Ensuring gender equality, a commitment made by the Republic of Moldova in the context of the 2030 Agenda

The Republic of Moldova is committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda, assuming a future where all key stakeholders in society collaborate synergistically to collectively address and diminish various manifestations of poverty. Moreover, it involves a concerted effort to combat inequalities, resolve environmental concerns, and tackle the pressing challenges posed by climate change. By prioritizing inclusivity, the Republic of Moldova aims to ensure that no individual or group is marginalized or overlooked in the pursuit of sustainable development. Although the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals are not legally binding, the United Nations, under the auspices of which the 2030 Agenda was conceived, aims to ensure that governments take responsibility for them and establish national frameworks (institutional, financing policies, monitoring) conducive to their implementation.

In this regard, the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Moldova have not taken long to appear. In 2016, the institutional framework for coordinating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was created, followed by a complex process of adjusting the goals, targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda to the specificities of Moldova. This process involved all stakeholders: national and local public authorities, the private sector, civil society, academia and development partners.

At the same time, a mid-term evaluation of the National Development Strategy "Moldova 2020", which was being implemented at that stage, was carried out. It was confirmed that the mentioned document was not adjusted to all international commitments of the Republic of Moldova, namely: the 2030 Agenda and the Association Agreement with the European Union, signed in 2014, and therefore, in September 2017, the elaboration of a new national long-term strategy was initiated, targeting the 2030 horizon: the National Development Strategy „Moldova 2030”. This was the basic stage for the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (further SDGs), including SDG 5 on gender equality in the national strategic planning system.

In 2020, the Republic of Moldova presented its first Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the United Nations High Level Political Forum. According to the assessment, one of the vulnerabilities identified in the Agenda implementation process was (and continues to remain), data unavailability for about 1/4 of the total nationalized SDGs indicators (341 indicators for monitoring 157 nationalized SDG targets), or in their absence it is not possible to objectively assess the situation regarding the degree of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The situation is even more alarming when it comes to the availability of data disaggregated

¹¹ https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/costing_manual_romanian_pentru_aprobare_24_11_2022.pdf

by gender, residence or vulnerability criteria, and this has a quite pronounced impact on ensuring gender equality, including SDG 4 (Quality education for all), SDG 5 (Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls), SDG 10 (Reducing inequalities), SDG 8 (Promoting sustainable economic growth, decent and well-paid jobs for all), SDG 10 (Reducing inequalities), SDG 16 (Strong and effective institutions) which call for information relevant to the situation of women and men, girls and boys in different socio-economic sectors. To address this deficiency, in 2022, the Government approved the national framework for monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹², which creates the premises for the information foundation for reporting on Moldova's progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda at the international level, but also at national level to inform policies in different sectors, including those necessary to ensure gender equality.

Although SDG 5, as is evident from the content of the targets it encompasses, is primarily geared towards ensuring the conditions for the empowerment and fulfilment of the potential of women and girls, gender equality is much more complex, including the male population.

Current situation regarding the assurance of gender equality in the Republic of Moldova

Gender equality tends to be considered an indicator for developed societies, but also developing ones should also ensure all the premises (institutional, policy framework, resources etc.) to achieve this goal. The global population includes over 50% women, in the Republic of Moldova the female population exceeds the male population by about 9%¹³. Despite international commitments and declarations, subsequently taken up at the national level, on the equality of all persons regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, etc., there are still many inequalities between males and females, for example wage gaps, access to financial resources, empowerment problems, etc. And if we look at it in terms of multiple disaggregation, these inequalities are getting even more pronounced connotations (for example: access to resources for a woman with disabilities living in the rural areas). The gender of one's birth should not influence one's dignity and quality of life and one's access to opportunities and resources.

The analysis of the situation in the Republic of Moldova on the topic of gender equality notices the fact that, although some progress has been achieved in recent years in ensuring equal opportunities and opportunities for men and women (e.g.: *increasing the number of women in elective and decision-making positions, raising awareness and including the gender dimension in some sectoral policies, raising society's awareness and awareness of stereotypes about women's role in society, as well as the institutional and professional strengthening of gender mainstreaming in policy development and evaluation, etc.*) gender disparities continue to persist.

¹² Hotărârea Guvernului nr. 953/2022 -

https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135555&lang=ro

¹³ https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice__POPrec__POP010/POP011500rcl.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774, accesat la data de 23/09/2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the gender dimension, causing worsening of the situation in the remaining areas, but also regressions in the areas with registered positive indicators. Complementary, the energy crisis further accentuates the vulnerability of the female population, or having access to more limited financial resources compared to the male population (e.g. wage disparities for the same work performed, lower pensions, unpaid domestic work), they are in a position to benefit from fewer energy resources.

The refugee crisis, which took place in the context of the war in Ukraine, calls on national and local public authorities to cope with and respond with support measures, such as living resources, employment, integration into the education system, provision of medical services, social and cultural integration, etc., for approximately 92.4 thousand people, who fled the war and are on the territory of the Republic of Moldova for an indefinite period, of which the female population is about 54.85 thousand people (63.3%)¹⁴.

According to the data presented in the Gender Equality Index, a study developed annually by the Partnership for Development Center¹⁵ in order to measure the level of equality between women and men in the Republic of Moldova, in 2023, the average level of equality between women and men, calculated for six strategic areas assessed, was estimated at 61 points (the target being 100 points), registering, after a progress of 3 points reached in 2022 compared to 2021, a regression of 1 point. Thus, in 2023, 4 areas out of 6 analyzed registered a worsening of the situation, namely: politics, access to resources, health and perceptions and stereotypes. Even as a result of political reforms, in recent years there has been a positive leap in gender equality indicators (an increase of 14 points in 2022 compared to 21), then, over the last two years, several reshuffles have been made in politics in public office, which is why several Female MP have ceased their tenures and their positions have been filled by men. Worryingly, the general regression in ensuring gender equality is mainly due to the worsening of public perceptions of the role of women and men. Compared to 2022, the accumulated score for perceptions and stereotypes have decreased by just 4 points, reaching 59 points on the scale from 0 to 100. Specifically, there was an increase in the proportion of the population who consider that the presence of women in politics is inappropriate and that they do not have the capacity to hold leadership positions, given that during the reference period, women held the most important positions in the state, such as: president of the country, prime minister, 39 deputies out of a total of 101, and members of the cabinet of ministers out of a total of 12 members, including the president of the Constitutional Court.

¹⁴ Republic of Moldova: Daily Population Trends (unhcr.org), accesat la data de 30/09/2022

¹⁵ Studiu realizat către Centrul Parteneriat pentru Dezvoltare, în cadrul programului “Inițiativă Comună pentru Oportunități Egale – Faza II”, implementat din resursele acordate de Agenția Elvețiană pentru Dezvoltare și Cooperare (SDC) și Suedia, accesat la data de 24/09/2022.

Table 1: Gender Equality Index.

Policy areas / Index per year	2009	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Tendința
labour market	61	61	61	62	61	60	59	55	6	+1
Politics	32	36	36	36	40	47	47	61	60	-1
Education	55	54	54	53	53	52	50	50	51	+1
Access to resources	77	74	75	79	77	76	73	75	59	-2
Perceptions and stereotypes	42	47	51	47	54	61	62	63	59	-4
Health	73	66	65	65	65	63	64	66	65	-1
General index	57	56	57	57	58	60	59	62	61	-1

Source: Study of Gender Equality for 2022, developed by the Partnership Center for Development

As mentioned above, gender inequalities can be both in related to women and rto men. An example of gender inequality related to men is the health sector. For example,, statistical data indicate a major gender disparity in life expectancy at birth, with women living, on average, 8 years longer than men (73.1 years and 65.2 years respectively). This difference can be explained by the healthier lifestyle for women and the different occupations of the two sexes and as a consequence - the higher level of premature mortality among men. Gender disparities in life expectancy also show the person's environment of residence, so if the gender gap with the given indicator in urban areas is 7 years, then in rural areas, it is 9 years.

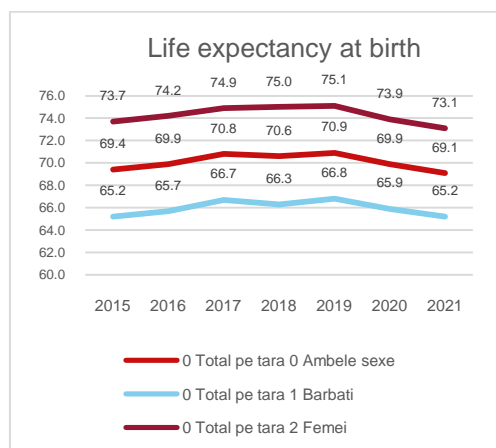


Figure 2: Life expectancy at birth by sex, 2015-2021, total by country.

Source: NBS

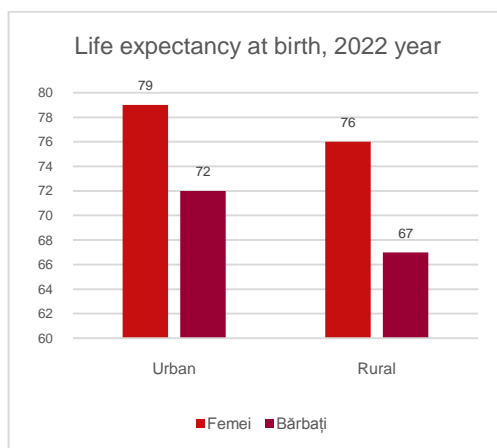


Figure 3: Life expectancy.

Source: NBS

General considerations regarding the national system of strategic planning and public policies in the Republic of Moldova

The national strategic planning system consists of planning documents and public policy documents, by types – strategy and program and distribution of policy documents per implementation period. In order to ensure the coherence and integrity of the policy system, including the linkage with the budgetary planning system, it is crucial that there is ensured a logical interdependence between its components, in which the general objectives set out in the priority strategic planning documents are taken over, planned and properly carried out in the other types of planning or public policy.

Assuming that the National Development Strategy is at the top of the policy system pyramid, a key condition for ensuring its proper implementation is the development of a coherent implementation mechanism, ensuring a clear synchronization between the National Development Strategy (NDS), the sectoral strategies and the National Development Plan (NDP), which in turn will be the basis for further planning at sectoral, institutional level and the budgetary planning framework.

Therefore, in order to ensure the achievement of this goal, in 2020, the Government introduced an instrument for the operationalization of the NDS, the Government Program and international commitments, new for the policy system of the Republic of Moldova, namely the National Development Plan, which is a cyclical document for public policy planning, for a period of 3 years, in which the priority objectives and actions of the NDS are transposed and detailed. The National Development Plan consists of a descriptive and an operational part,, both being structured based on the general objectives set out in the NDS (at the moment there are 10 general objectives based on 10 dimensions of quality of life) and correlated with the objectives of sustainable development and the Agreement on Association between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union and the Moldova-EU Association Agenda.

The second type of key document for ensuring the implementation of the NDS is the sectoral strategy, which in turn is transposed into programs, the medium-term budgetary framework, the annual activity plans of the authorities. Following the NDS approval, ministries and central administrative authorities had to either review and adjust existing public policy documents that do not comply with the NDS, or develop other new documents.

Gender mainstreaming in the National Development Strategy „ European Moldova 2030 ”

Public policies can have a different impact on women and men. Age, ethnicity, skills, residence, and the rules and traditions of the society in which they live influence the activities and responsibilities of women and men (roles of gender), their social status, opportunities and constraints they have in everyday life. The policy makers and decision-makers have to take these differences into account and address them accordingly. Identifying and addressing inequalities in public policy formulation is essential to ensure equal opportunities for women and men, fair access to resources and opportunities, fair representation, resilience to crises and shocks, etc.

Given the central role of the National Development Strategy in the national strategic planning system, it makes sense for it to take into account cross-sectoral policies area, which will subsequently be integrated by the authorities into medium and short-term planning documents, as well as sectoral public policies. As mentioned

above, gender equality is such an area, thus considering it at all stages of the public policy cycle is a premise that state policies and interventions respond equally to the interests and needs of women and men.

After a rather complex process of elaboration, consultation, repeated approvals by the Government (the political crises of the last 4 years have had a major impact on the process of promoting the document of the NDS, the initiation of which started in 2017, and its first version being approved by the Government in November 2018, as well as by the Parliament in December 2018), on December 21, 2022, Law no. 315/2022 for the approval of the National Development Strategy „European Moldova 2030” was published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova

According to the authors of the document (State Chancellery), enshrined in the Explanatory Note, the National Development Strategy „European Moldova 2030” defines the medium and long-term development vision for strengthening the resilience of the Republic of Moldova to regional and global crises affecting our country, thus creating the basis for sustainable and inclusive development. The novelty of the document also consists in focusing on human being, on his/her development needs and aspirations, in contrast to previous national development strategies that were mainly focused on economic development.

Thus, focusing on human being as the ultimate beneficiary of the benefits of reforms, but not as a resource for achieving them, the general objectives of the strategy were inspired by the concept applied as a standard, at the level of the European Union, for measuring the phenomenon of the people’s life quality. According to this, a higher quality of life implies achieving sustainable and broad social progress in ten dimensions:

- *income level;*
- *living conditions;*
- *working conditions;*
- *level of education;*
- *health status;*
- *social climate;*
- *use of time;*
- *quality of government;*
- *public safety and security;*
- *environmental quality*

Thus, the NDS contains 10 general objectives, detailed in 33 specific objectives. For each general objective, the current situation has been analyzed (sometimes using gender - disaggregated data), the connection with the relevant Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda has been shown, , as well as described how the authorities aim to achieve that objective. It should be noted that despite the mandatory requirements of the methodological framework for public policies, as regards the formulation of specific objectives, they do not meet the SMART criterion .

Following the enumeration of the general and specific objectives, the document contains an imposing list of policy directions and priority interventions, through which the specific objectives will be achieved, indicating, for each policy direction, the identification code of the objective to which it will contribute. A brief analysis of of the document allows us to note that for achieving the specific objective 7.1. *Building an*

integral, responsible, efficient public administration, transparent and open to citizen participation in decision-making processes most priority policy directions and interventions (about 130 out of a total of 340) will contribute, which supports and complements the government's statements on the attention it pays to strengthening the public administration system.

The Government has set in the NDS¹⁶ national priorities, connected to the country's commitments under the 2030 Agenda and the Moldova-EU Association Agreement, and the structure and elements of the document underpin the development of the national strategic planning framework, highlighting the vision, priorities, general objectives, relevant long-term directions of intervention.

We further aim to analyze the degree to which the gender dimension has been integrated into the framework of the NDS „European Moldova 2030”, using as research methodology the Guide for integrating the perspective of gender equality in the public policy-making process¹⁷ and the Guide on integrating the provisions of the National Development Strategy into planning documents and public policy documents at national level¹⁸, in the part aimed at integrating the principle of leaving no one behind in the development process. These guides are useful tools for developing and evaluating public policies in terms of quality and compliance with the national policy system as a whole, as well as assessing the relevance of their objectives in relation to national priorities and ensuring that needs and concerns of different stakeholders are taken into account. In this sense, the analysis is performed according to the following criteria:

1. Considering the gender dimension at the stage of analysis and definition of the problem

Are the data used in the situation analysis disaggregated by the gender criterion? Are specific gender needs / concerns identified? Is an analysis of the causes that determine gender inequality carried out? Has the process of defining and analyzing the problem allowed the equitable participation of men and women? These are the basic questions, which allow us to assess the extent to which the gender dimension has been taken into account in Chapter „Situation Analysis ” of the NDS „European Moldova 2030 ”.

Use of disaggregated statistical data

The NDS `Situation Analysis` chapter is divided into two distinct dimensions: international – to describe the context reflected by *global trends* in economics, industry, labor culture, demography; *potential global and regional threats*, such as: military, energy, climate, pandemic crises; and last but not least, the opportunities identified, such as: *technological and digital progress* and increasing interest and civic awareness among the young population.

¹⁶ The NDS, in all draft versions, integrates the SDG targets considered as accelerators of sustainable development.

¹⁷ Guide for integrating the perspective of gender equality in the public policy-making process: <https://progen.md/ghid-pentru-integrarea-perspectiviei-egalitatii-de-gen-in-procesul-de-elaborare-a-politicilor-publice/>, accessed on 23/09/2022.

¹⁸ Guide on integrating the provisions of the National Development Strategy into planning documents and public policy documents at national level: https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/ghid_copertat_coral.pdf, accessed on 23/09/2022.

Although it is stated that the NDS „European Moldova 2030” changes the paradigm of public policies and that it, unlike the NDS „Moldova 2020”, is focused on human-being, on quality of life and on the full use of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the person, as well as that it transposes at national level, the SDGs and the principles of the 2030 Agenda, including the principle „ No one is left behind”, the analytical part of the document lacks references to international rankings focused on human development. This does not allow us to understand whether or not the NDS, the priority objectives and directions of intervention set, take into account the evolution of human development and the components deriving from it, at international level.

A benchmark in this regard could serve the Human Development Reports, annual publications of the United Nations Development Program, through which, on the one hand, the emerging problems of humanity are analyzed and, on the other hand, the human rights situation, quality of life and opportunities to capitalize on the possibilities of the person in each state are mapped, thus positioning countries in a global ranking. The unit of measurement used to establish the mentioned ranking is the Human Development Index. This is an indicator that measures the average achievements of states, in three basic dimensions of human development - a long and healthy life, access to knowledge/education and the existence of a decent standard of living.

The Human Development Report for 2021/2022, dedicated to the analysis of uncertainties and insecurity of human safety in the context of crises in the last three years, places the Republic of Moldova on the 80th place (since 191), climbing 10 positions compared to 2020, a good result but insufficient, if we compare with the neighboring states that position themselves on the 53rd place - Romania and 77 - Ukraine, respectively. The ranking is led by the Nordic countries.

Table 2: Human Development Index and its components, 2022.

HDI ranking	Country	SDG 3	SDG 4.3	SDG 4.4	SDG 8.5	
		Human Development Index (HDI)	Life expectancy at birth	Planned schooling years	Average schooling years	Gross national income per capita
		value	(years)	(years)	(years)	(estimated based on purchasing power, \$)
		2021	2021	2021	2021	
1	Switzerland	0,962	84,0	16,5	13,9	66.933
2	Norway	0,961	83,2	18,2	13,0	64.660
3	Icekand	0,959	82,7	19,2	13,8	55.782
53	Romania	0,821	74,2	14,2	11,3	30.027
77	Ukraine	0,773	71,6	15,0	11,1	13.256
80	Republica of Moldova	0,767	68,8	14,4	11,8	14.875

Source: Human Development Report, 2021/2022

Subsidiary, if we are to analyze in depth the essential components of human development, we identify the gender equality aspect, reflected in the Human Development Report through the Gender Development Index, which measures the disparities of the HDI, depending on gender. The closer the ratio is to the value „1”, the

smaller the difference between women and men. Values for the three components: longevity, education (with two indicators) and income per capita – are also represented by gender. According to this indicator, countries are divided into 5 groups, depending on the size of the calculated HDI gap. The Republic of Moldova is placed in group 1, along with developed countries, including the Nordic ones, which lead the general ranking of human development, which allows us to conclude that our country, internationally, it can be treated as an example of ensuring and promoting gender equality, although inequalities persist, at least in the areas presented in the table below: life expectancy at birth and access to education – inequality with men, wage disparities or other income – inequality with women. These indicators should (in the context of NDS development -) be carefully analyzed and proposed policies and intervention measures to reduce those gaps.

Table 3: Gender Development Index, 2022.

PositionH DI	Country	Gender Development Index		Human Development Index		SDG 3 life expectancy at birth		SDG 4.3 Years planned for education		SDG 4.4 Average schooling years		SDG 8.5 Gross national income per capita(estimated based on purchasing power, \$)	
		Value	Group of countries	F	B	F	B	F	B	F	B	F	B
		2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021
1	Switzerland	0,967	2	0,944	0,976	85,9	82,0	16,4	16,6	13,5	14,2	54.59	79.45
2	Norway	0,983	1	0,950	0,966	84,9	81,6	18,9	17,5	13,1	12,9	54.69	74.44
3	Iceland	0,976	1	0,947	0,971	84,2	81,2	20,3	18,1	13,9	13,7	47.13	64.00
53	România	0,994	1	0,819	0,823	77,9	70,6	14,7	13,8	11,0	11,6	24.55	35.87
77	Ukraine	1,012	1	0,776	0,766	76,7	66,5	15,0	14,9	11,5	10,7	10.37	16.60
80	Republic of Moldova	1,010	1	0,771	0,763	73,5	64,4	14,8	14,1	11,9	11,8	12.087	17.961

Source: Human Development Report, 2021/2022

In the national dimension, the NDS presents the situation in the areas of human rights, income, infrastructure and living conditions, education, culture and personal development, health and social protection systems, public administration, justice, human security and environmental quality. Given that the NDS, according to its declaration and the vision on which it is built, is centred on people and quality of life, a distinct attention is paid to human rights issues, but it is limited to generalities on the human rights situation, without presenting any statistical evidence. Therefore, no data are found on the situation of women's and / or men's rights as social beings with different needs and interests. The report on the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2021¹⁹ could serve as a valuable resource for strengthening that section. However, records, in disaggregated places, are included in the analysis of the

¹⁹ <https://cancelaria.gov.md/ro/apc/rapoarte-nationaleinternationale>, This page was accessed on September 24, 2022

situation of sectoral areas and especially in the part aimed at capitalizing on the rights of access to justice or access to decision-making positions.

We also attest the use of disaggregated statistical data in the section on *people's incomes*, in which inequalities are recognized and highlighted in the female population. Thus, despite the principles of equal and non-discriminatory treatment, promoted by state policies, Moldovan society still faces a major discrepancy between the incomes of women and those of men, both during the active economic period of life (in the average 20-21 years) and later at the retirement age. Consequently, the gap between the employment rate in urban areas – 38.4 p.p. and rural areas – 21.1 p.p., which denotes more limited economic opportunities for women. We believe that the section could have been strengthened by presenting information on the number of MSEs founded by women and men respectively. The next section, related to *infrastructure and living conditions*, omits references to gender-sensitive indicators. Given women's access to more limited financial resources compared to the male population, it is clear that women-led households are in a situation of higher vulnerability, and state authorities must take this into account in the design of support and / or sectoral development interventions.

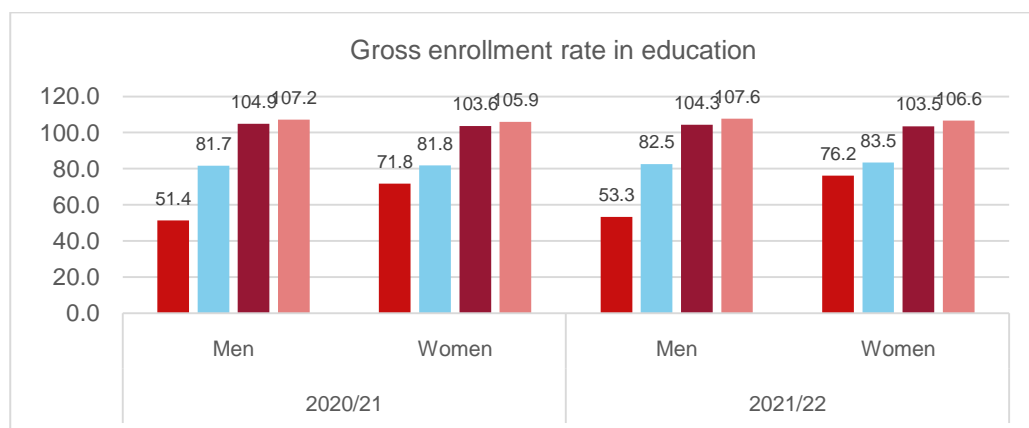


Figure 6: Gross enrollment rate in education at educational levels. Percent.

Source: NBS

The *education* is an area that requires a lot of attention from the authorities, or the level of training and training of specialists on the one hand depends on its quality, but also the creation of the person's life skills. The section reflects the position of the Republic of Moldova in the international rankings on educational performance (PISA, OECD), reveals the general challenges of the education system, but omits relevant information in terms of gender dimension. Thus, a problem of the educational system in the Republic of Moldova, not reflected in the NDS is the significant dropout rate of young people aged between 18-24 years. This increases the share of NEET in the total population. Official statistics show that, although the gross enrollment rate of boys in primary and secondary education is higher than that of girls, the situation is reversed in the secondary and tertiary stages, respectively. Complementary, it is observed that boys are prone to drop out of (second-stage and higher secondary) studies and invest less in

obtaining value-added skills in professional development, especially in rural areas. The causes of abandonment are diverse, mainly being of a social or economic nature.

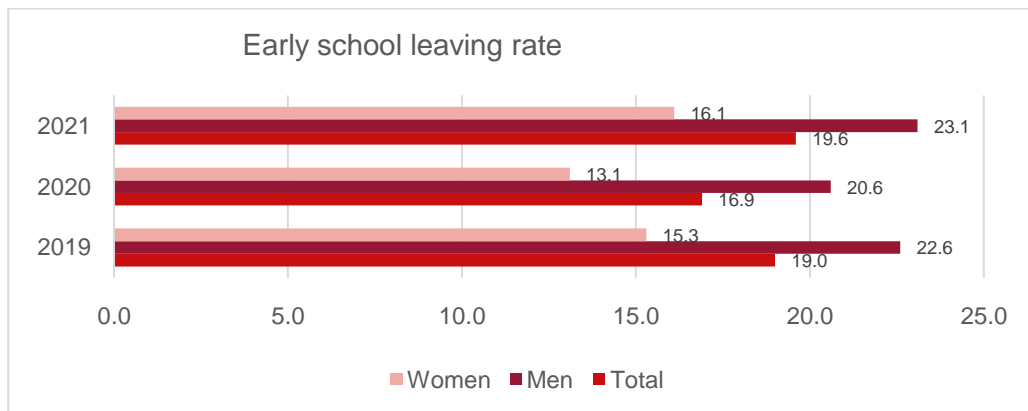


Figure 7: Early leaving rate of the education system of the population aged 18-24. Percent.
Source: NBS

Also, another challenge of the education system is the predisposition for studies STEM (Natural Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) more of boys than girls, choice that is most often influenced by stereotypes about gender relationships.

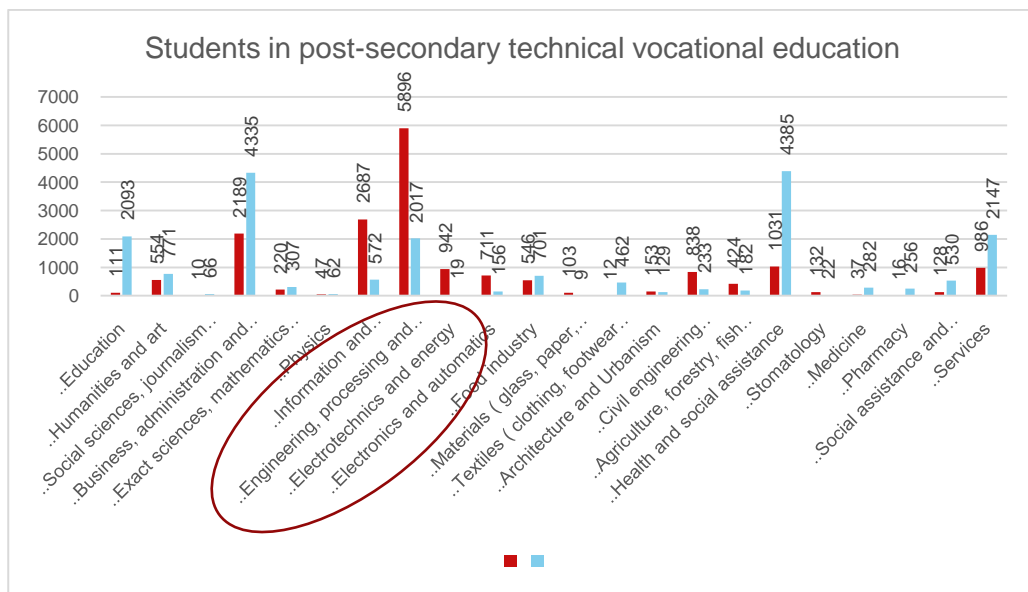


Figure 8: Students in post-secondary technical vocational education by fields of vocational training, academic year 2021-2022. Number of students.
Source: NBS

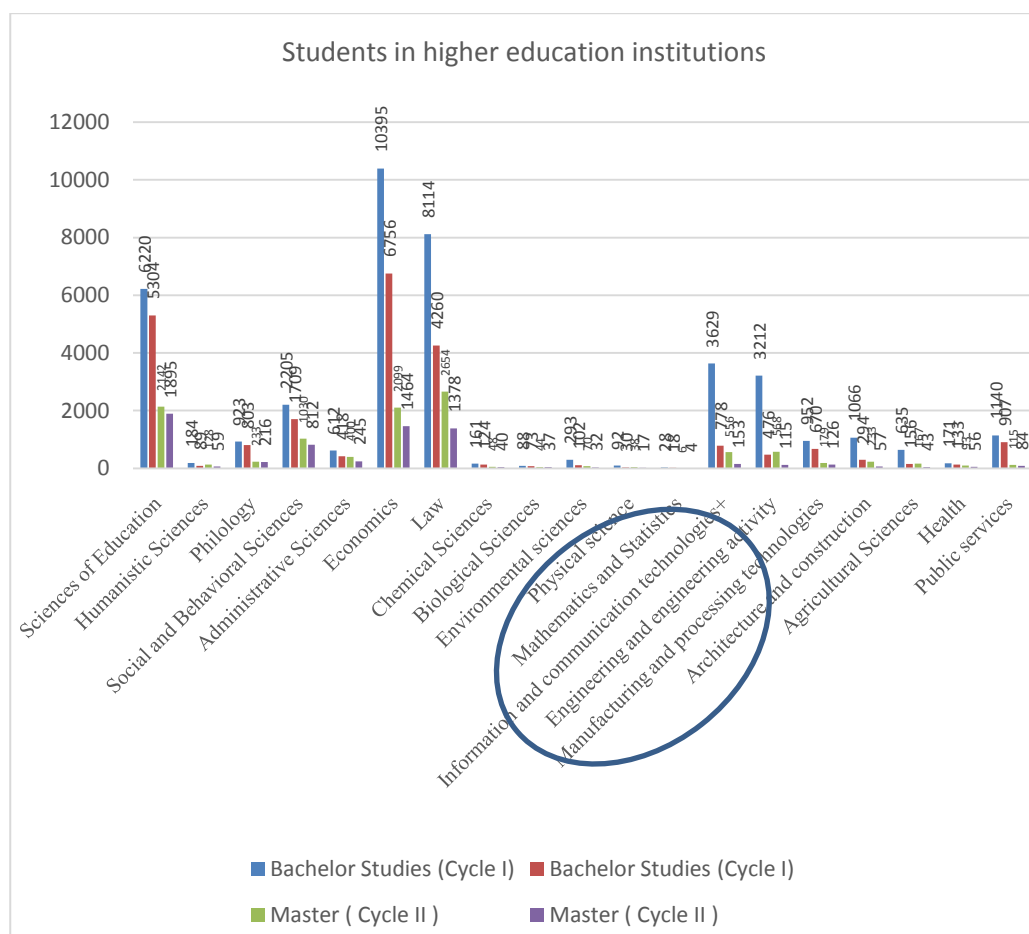


Figure 9: Students in higher education institutions by general fields of study, year of studies 2021-2022. Number of students.

Source: NBS

Options for fields of study influence the career path and, of course, the subsequent earnings of the working period of their lives.

In terms of *Culture and personal development*, although the national statistical system has also disaggregated data according to the gender criterion in the part concerning the annual allocations of households for culture and recreation, the NDS provides only an analysis from the perspective of data in territorial profile without assessing this policy area from gender perspective. Thus, according to the information in the table below, taken from the Statistical Data Bank, it is highlighted that, in total per country, the percentage of expenses from the total expenses of a household during a year, intended for culture and recreation is higher in the case of male-led households. The differences are insignificant, but they still highlight the preferences of households in the part aimed at spending free time and investments made in personal development. The smallest investments in culture and recreation are made by rural households, led by men.

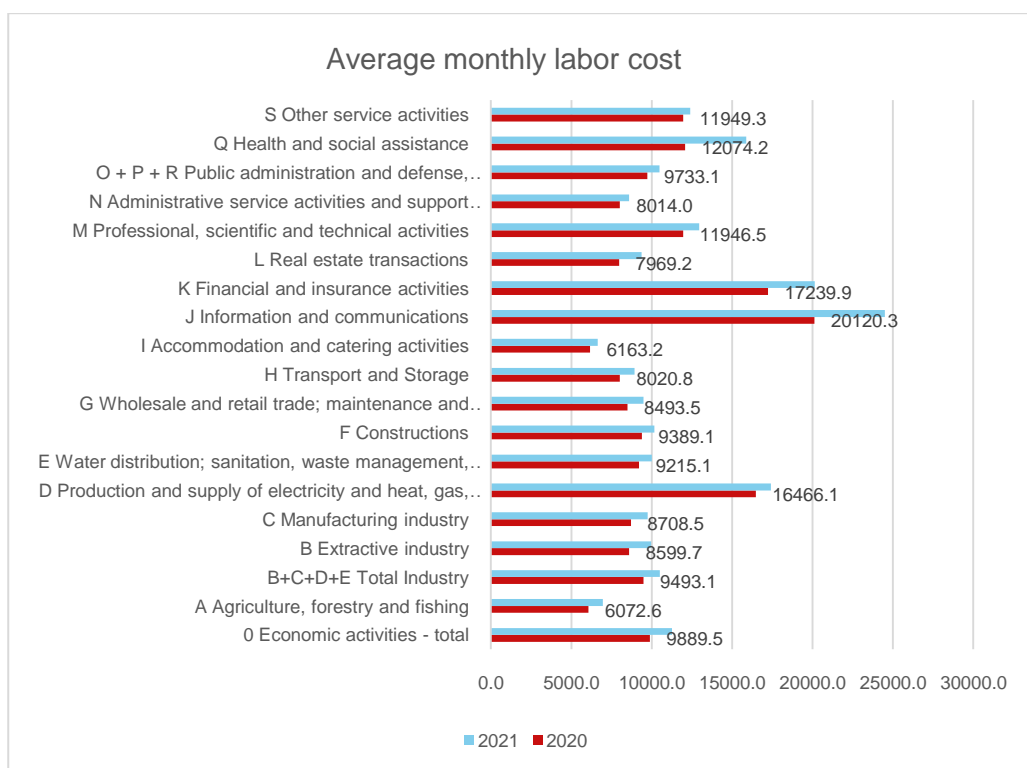


Figure 10: Average monthly labor cost per employee by economic activities (CAEM), Lei.
Source: NBS

Total per country				Urban				Rural			
Men		Women		Men		Women		Men	Wo men	Percentages compared to the total	
M D L	% compared to the total	M D L	% compared to the total	M D L	% compared to the total	M D L	% compared to the total	M D L			
65,0	2,2	60,9	1,9	12,8,0	3,4	94,9	2,4	27,8	1,1	33,2	1,3

Table 4: Average monthly consumption expenses per person for Culture and recreation, by Household head sex. MDL and Percentages compared to total household expenses, 2021.

Source: NBS

The national statistical system overlooks information on the number of people employed in this sector. However, the data on the average monthly income by types of activity, characteristic of the cultural field, highlight the presence of a significant salary discrepancy among employees in the types of activity specific to the sector. Therefore, salary discrepancies are also a problem for the field of culture and related activities.

The section on *health and well-being* examines issues in the field, including from a gender perspective, highlighting the major gender disparity in life expectancy at birth, women living, on average, 8 years longer than men (73.1 years and 65.2 years respectively). It also mentions the prevalence of cases of morbidity among men caused by both infectious and non-communicable diseases.

Solidarity and social protection analyze the challenges facing the insurance and social assistance system. These include the small amount of pensions and other social benefits to support different categories of the population in situations of incapacity for work/vulnerability, without highlighting the gender gap in the average size of the established pension.

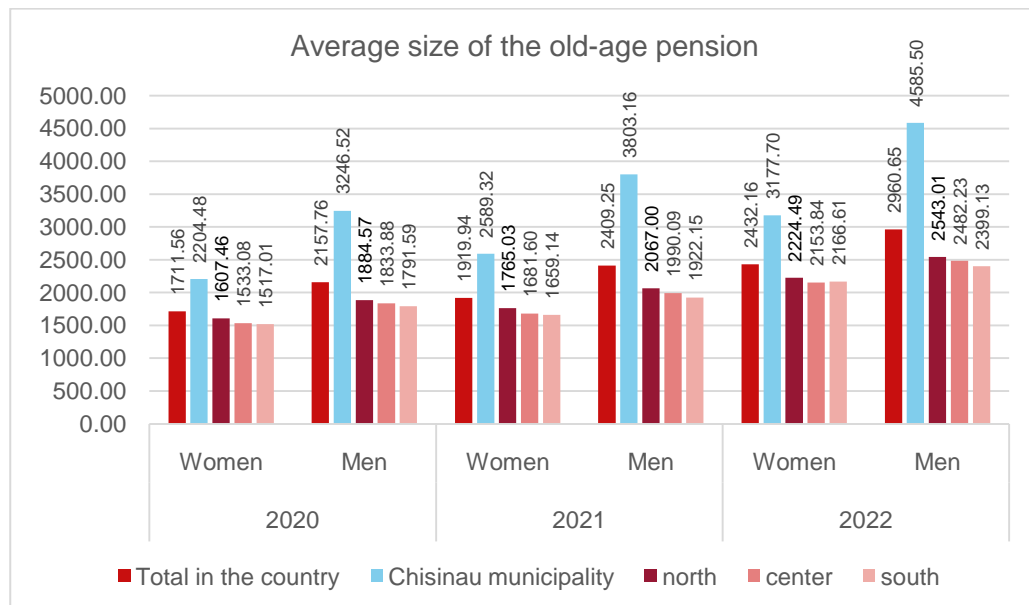


Figure 11: Average size of the old-age pension, Situation on January 1, 2022 MDL. NBS
Source: NBS

In addition, the challenges of the social protection system are analyzed, highlighting its dependence on wage levels, employment rate, informal economy share, aging and population migration.

The sections *Trust in public administration and Trust in justice* analyzes the activity of state institutions with a mandate to exercise executive power – Government, its subordinated entities and local public administration, and, respectively, of the – court. Both systems' major challenges are revealed, which hinder their efficiency in carrying out their missions and, as a result, diminish society's confidence in them. The gender perspective is omitted, or no data are found on gender representation among dignitaries, civil servants (senior management, management, execution), as well as judges. Although the gender dimension is lacking in the analysis of problems identified in the justice sector, it is to be appreciated, highlighting the categories of population in vulnerable situations, including accessing legal aid services.

The *human security*, the penultimate section of the analytical part of the NDS, is analyzed in terms of the problem of economic security of the population, reflected by the indicators of poverty; the problem of food security; energy security; and personal security against risks and vulnerabilities to crime, accidents and hazards. The mentioned problems are treated based on general records, anchored in the statistics by year, territorial profile, as well as estimates related to regional trends. By the nature of the problems presented, arising from those mentioned in other analytical sections of the

the NDS, given the narrower access to resources and the more limited opportunities, the female population is in a situation of inequality, including in terms of human security. However, the respective conclusion is not found in the NDS.

The last analytical section, but no less important, is dedicated to the *quality of the environment*. Among the evaluated aspects are the quantity and quality of water available for consumption, the evolution of climate change; air and soil quality; expansion and sustainability of forest areas. Adapting and mitigating climate change is essential for the protection of the means of well-being and for the continuous progress of sustainable development. Although climate change affects all members of society, its impact may be different on men and women. It is therefore important to consider measures to adapt/mitigate climate change, including from a gender perspective, taking into account the roles and responsibilities of women and men, perceived still differently in society their community²⁰. Unfortunately, NDS treats the consequences of climate change only in terms of potential repercussions on the agricultural sector, the environment and public finances, which will worsen if no urgent measures and interventions are taken to combat these changes. The impact on people, men and women is omitted.

Specific needs and concerns

NDS reflects to a minimum the specific needs and concerns from the gender perspective. Overall, the analytical part of the document highlights the generic problems of society, within the limits of the systems reflected in the document. However, connected to people's needs and interests, we retain their problems arising, first of all, from income which, for a significant part of the population, does not cover the need for decent living, limiting their access to infrastructure and utilities, health services, culture and personal development, etc..

To compensate for these shortages, state authorities intervene through support mechanisms, including the social protection system or other types of assistance, which in turn already develops systemic problems: non-sustainability and insufficiency of the income of the population (vulnerable categories) from the insurance and social assistance system; lack of trust in state authorities; lack of confidence in the judiciary and its lack of capacity to provide specialized legal aid services to various vulnerable groups. In addition to the needs of poverty reduction and its effects, the needs and concerns of people on the energy security side are also reflected in a highlighted way, food and personal risks and vulnerabilities to crime, accidents and hazards, however, without considering the gender dimension.

Environmental issues are more presented as risk factors for agriculture, the quality and quantity of natural resources and the public finance system, than as challenges that threaten a person's right to a healthy and sustainable environment.

Analysis of causes and factors that determine gender inequality

The gender gaps, which are highlighted in NDS, were analyzed in terms of causes as well as the factors that determine them. Thus, in the income part, it is reflected

²⁰ Capitalizing on the gender dimension in sectoral development policies in the context of climate change adaptation: Guide / Valentina Bodrug-Lungu, Ala Druta; ADA / UNDP project: „ Support for the national planning process of adapting the Republic of Moldova to climate change ”. – Chisinau: S. n., 2017 (SE „ Central Printing House”) 48 p, accessed on September 25, 2022

the unjustified maintenance of salary discrepancies for the same work performed, the lower employment rate for women than men, the different level of labor productivity, the preponderance of men in managerial positions, as well as in fields of activity with more attractive salaries (for example ICT). With reference to the field of health, where there is a gender inequality towards men, the lower addressability of men to the doctor is highlighted as causes, less healthy lifestyle, higher consumption of alcohol and tobacco products, especially among young people, etc. The causes of gender inequalities in education and the old-age pension system have been omitted in NDS.

Air participation of men and women in the process of defining the problem (s)

In the Explicative Note, which accompanied the draft law for the approval of NDS (at the promotion stage), in the approval and consultation section of the project, mentions the provision of a participatory advisory process and including, in which all interested parties were given the opportunity to comment on the document.

The public consultation was made by placing the document on the participant.gov.md²¹ page, on July 26, 2022, and the deadline for submitting proposals allowed for detailed examination of the document by interested parties (by 15 August). The profile of the authors of the comments, placed on the website, indicates that they come from regions, therefore the importance of NDS and the involvement of citizens in its elaboration, is aware at the level of the local public administration. In addition, the State Chancellery also organized an event to present the document to which the press, the business environment, representatives of civil society, development partners were invited. In the public consultation process, more than 300 proposals were received on the project.

However, there is no evidence of the level of representation in public consultations of men and women. What is certain is that the NDS version adopted by the Government integrates issues related to the gender perspective to a greater extent than the initial version of the document, placed for consultations on 26 July (which analyzed only the income gaps of women and men). This is an argument in favor of the fact that, in the public consultation process, the issues of gender inequality have been addressed, and as a result, the document has become more sensitive to the gender dimension. But as reported above, the analytical part could have included other references and expertise existing in the analysis of gender inequalities in Moldovan society.

2. NDS's results framework analyzed from the perspective of the gender dimension

Are the strategic objectives of the document sensitive to the dimension of gender equality? Are there any positive / reasonable accommodation measures designed to ensure gender equality? Will strategic targets / priority directions for action lead to the achievement of gender equality objectives? Do strategic targets / priority directions provide for special measures for women who are vulnerable groups? The questions presented serve as benchmarks for assessing gender mainstreaming in NDS's priority vision, objectives and directions.

²¹ Government web platform, through which public entities inform and consult the society about policy initiatives that they intend to develop or have already been developed

Gender sensitivity of NDS's strategic objectives, targets and policy directions

Even if the gender dimension is integrated to a more limited extent in the analysis of the situation, then in terms of objectives, targets and policy directions (Results framework), the gender perspective, materialized by reducing inequalities and inequities of opportunities and access to resources between women and men is present in all 10 general objectives.

Strategic targets / priority directions for action provide for special measures for women who are vulnerable groups.

As mentioned in the previous section, all 10 General Objectives of NDS include in the strategic targets measures to combat inequalities between women and men. Additionally, in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda principle: Leave No One Behind, we noticed the consideration of vulnerable groups, their needs and concerns in establishing intervention measures. The ExplicativeNote states, among other things, that for each of the 10 General Objectives vulnerable population groups have been identified and measures have been proposed to combat these vulnerabilities, respectively.

NDS being the benchmark for other planning documents, as well as sectoral policy documents, cannot intervene with too many analytical details or detailed multicriteria actions, or we would find ourselves in the situation of a voluminous document, difficult to manage. However, it should „set the tone” or set out the basic principles, which should be taken over later by the other documents, in which the authors (responsible public authorities and inclusive working groups) will analyze in more detail the situations of gender inequality, complemented by other disaggregation criteria: environment of residence, age, disability and will propose remedial solutions based on identified problems and causes.

3. Gender anchoring in the NDS implementation framework

The implementation framework refers both to the planning of resources necessary for the effective achievement of the proposed objectives and to the establishment of a viable monitoring and evaluation system, to assess the progress in the process of implementing the document and to assess its impact on society.

In the light of the gender perspective, it examines whether (financial, human, time, technological, administrative resources) are planned for conducting measures / interventions aimed at reducing gender inequalities and, at the same time, whether monitoring and evaluation indicators are gender sensitive.

On the resource planning side, it should be noted that, directly NDS, according to its nature (visionary long-term development document) does not include the cost estimation component and respectively, there is no way to ensure their planning. However, the costs of the actions must be provided in the National Development Plan (NDP), which is a medium-term planning document and the main instrument for operationalizing NDS. Thus, it is important that at the stage of elaboration of the NDP, the measures proposed by the NDS for the reduction of gender inequalities are taken in full, and for each one, to estimate costs and to ensure their planning in the Medium-Term Budget Framework (MTBF). However, planning under the CBTM is not enough, or to carry out one or another intervention measure, in addition to financial resources, other equally important types of resources are needed, which in turn are to be properly planned and allocated. We refer here

to human resources, time, technological, administrative, capabilities, etc. These resources will be planned under the annual institutional action plans.

With reference to the set of gender-sensitive indicators, we note that gender statistics operate with 4 categories sensitive to the gender dimension, namely: disaggregated indicators by gender; specific gender indicators; indicators of gender relevance and, indicators chosen by women rather than men and vice versa²². The NDS monitoring and evaluation framework includes a set of general impact indicators, the aim of which is to assess progress in improving the situation of the 10 general objectives. The values of the basic, intermediate and final targets will serve as benchmarks in this regard.

On the gender dimension we have indicators on the representation of women in decision-making processes, as well as the index of gender parity, at the tertiary level of educational institutions. Gender sensitive indicators are lacking for other areas of socio-economic interest. However, similar to planning the resources needed to implement the document, monitoring and evaluating product and outcome indicators, including by collecting and analyzing disaggregated data by sex or other categories of gender-sensitive indicators, should be provided mainly at the planning / development stage of medium-term planning documents (NDP) and operational planning (annual institutional action plans). In both cases, public entities must ensure the coordination of the process of integrating NDS provisions into planning and sectoral policy documents.

Conclusions

An important premise for ensuring the efficient implementation of NDS in the complexity of its objectives, targets and interventions is the manifestation of political support for the process. Unfortunately, many of the failures of public policies have been generated by the inconsistency of political factors with the decisions taken and the need to implement them. The experience of the Chisinau administration reveals that the successor governments, most of the time, ignore and / or repeal the policy initiatives, even the long-term ones, of the successive governments. In order for public policy objectives to be achieved and their impact to have beneficial effects on the population²³, it is crucial to ensure their consistency and sustainability throughout the planned implementation period. Therefore, with reference to NDS „European Moldova 2030”, society's expectations are for the document to enjoy the political support needed for adoption, promulgation and, most importantly, creating all the prerequisites and conditions for its implementation.

Gender integration in the National Development Plan, the Government Action Plan and the Institutional Plan of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection

As already mentioned in previous sections, the National Development Plan is a medium-term planning document of the Government, which operationalizes the

²² Guide for users of gender statistics: <https://statistica.gov.md/category.php?l=ro&idc=264>, accesat la data de 25 septembrie 2022

²³ Tool used by policy makers to predict what the effects of one or another public policy will be is ex-ante analysis. With its help, the potential multidimensional impacts of the proposed solutions to solve a societal problem are analyzed. Decisions select the solution with clearly obvious benefits for society as a whole, as well as vulnerable groups of the population.

general objectives of the National Development Strategy, correlating them with the commitments deriving from the Government Program (the political document on the basis of which the Prime Minister-designate and his team receive a vote of confidence from Parliament) and the international commitments of the Republic Moldova.

This year, for the first time for the Government's activity, the National Development Plan was approved, as a tactical planning tool, as well as the Government's Annual Plan, as an operational tool, but which includes only measures aimed at developing and promoting draft regulations and public policy documents.

As a structure, the NDP consists of the descriptive part, which repeats the NDS structure, and the operational or tabular part, which integrates the specific objectives and directly the actions, proposed for achieving the general objectives, the terms of achievement, the responsible institutions, the estimated costs of indicating the source, as well as the reference document from which the commitment for the realization of which each action is proposed derives.

NDP for the years 2023-2025 was approved at the Government meeting on February 28, 2023 (at the time of elaboration of this research, it is not yet published in the Official Monitor of the Republic of Moldova). According to it, the document ensures the operationalization of the provisions of the National Development Strategy „European Moldova 2030”, Government Activity Program „Moldova thrives, safe, European” and international commitments, including the Association Agreement Republic of Moldova – European Union, Moldova-EU Association Agenda 2021-2027, commitments deriving from the status of candidate country for EU membership, Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

However, following the analysis of the document, with reference to commitments aimed at ensuring gender equality, it is found that, although the provisions of the Government Program and the Association Agenda relevant to the mentioned policy area are found in the NDP, including recommendation number 9 from the list of conditions/recommendations of the European Commission on granting candidate country status, then we note that, like the NDS, the NDPs are not found as targets to be achieved either, the SDG 5 targets, except being only SDG 5.2., Which creates a risk for achieving a systemic and comprehensive result in this field.

In the same perspective, if our findings regarding the results framework of the NDS indicate an average sensitivity to the gender dimension, materialized by the strategic targets formulated, then in the case of NDP, researching the actions proposed by the authorities to achieve the specific objectives (to note that the strategic targets related to the objectives listed in NDS, in NDP are not found), we deduce that their relevance is vague to achieving positive results in ensuring gender equality and non-discrimination.

More than that, the analysis of the list of indicators proposed by the authorities for monitoring and evaluating the achievement of the specific objectives listed in NDP (transposed from NDS) allows us to conclude that they are largely insensitive to size of the kind, or none of those proposed and approved by the executive provides for gender-based disaggregation, not to mention other criteria of vulnerability. Therefore, even if it is established that NDS and NDP, respectively, are built on a human-based approach, including the principle of the 2030 Agenda Leave no one behind, the type of indicators proposed to assess the results of initiatives proposed by public entities indicates otherwise. Thus, out of the total indicators included in NDP, only two are gender

sensitive, namely: (i) reduction of salary disparity by 3.6 p.p. by 2025 (iii) increasing the share of women in public senior management positions by about 4 p.p. until 2025, this provided that, in order to reach the first mentioned indicator, the proposed actions are irrelevant.

Consequently, an important element, mentioned above in the analysis of the NDS implementation framework, is related to the planning of the resources necessary to carry out the reforms in general, and according to the interest of this research, to ensure gender equality. For the PND approved for the period 2023-2025 this aspect represents a vulnerability or, except for a few actions, mainly for the construction of infrastructure and the purchase of software and for which costs have probably been estimated with technical assistance projects, the cost estimate per general is omitted. However, the accompanying Explicative Note mentions a total NDP implementation cost of about 51.7 billion. MDL, but how it was calculated remains an open question.

In the part concerning the Government Action Plan for 2023, we ascertain the initiative of the Executive to elaborate and approve in the first quarter of this year the National Program for the Acceleration of Gender Equality in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2023-2027 and the Action Plan for the implementation to it, which we will refer to in more detail in the next section. According to the authors of the note, the approval of a separate policy document on an intersectoral policy area has no place or, this will constitute an additional burden of planning, elaboration, monitoring and evaluation that entities will have, as relevant interventions must be integrated into sectoral policy documents anyway, for example: Employment program - inequalities of opportunities in access to employment and access to resources, feminization or masculinization of certain professions; Health strategy and underlying programs – increase in life expectancy, including reduction of gender disparities in this area; Education strategy and related programs – inequalities present in tertiary education and / or under-representation of girls to STEM specialties, etc.

Unfortunately, the institutional initiatives planned for 2023 by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection²⁴ in the part related to ensuring gender equality cannot be analyzed, or, Its action plan was not made public.

Program for accelerating gender equality in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2023-2027 and the Action Plan for its implementation

Without repeatedly referring to the relevance and timeliness of a separate policy paper for an area of cross-sectoral policies such as gender equality, we will continue to focus on the content of the Gender Equality Acceleration Program, as ambitious as they are, but at the same time real objectives and activities proposed and what are the expectations of the entities as a result of the implementation of the Program.

The version analyzed in the research is the one subject to public consultations, which is most likely and natural, will be adjusted following proposals and recommendations from all interested governmental and non-governmental entities.

²⁴ <https://particip.gov.md/ro/document/stages/anunt-privind-consultarea-publica-a-proiectului-de-hotarare-cu-privire-la-aprobarea-programului-de-accelerare-a-egalitatii-de-gen-in-republica-moldova-pentru-anii-2023-2027-si-planului-de-actiuni-pentru-implementarea-acestuia/9991>, accessed on March 22, 2023

According to the vision established in the document, the Program aims to significantly increase the level of gender equality in areas relevant to the European Moldova 2030 Agenda (NDS) such as health, education, labor market, entrepreneurship, social protection and local development, ensuring a level of ambition and sustainability correlated with the needs, expectations and impediments of the Republic of Moldova in the context of true equality and equity between women and men, girls and boys²⁵. Therefore, the policy areas, in which the Government intends to intervene through this program, are areas that indeed, based on disaggregated statistical data, face gender inequalities, both in relation to women and in relation to men.

The results framework of the Program (proposed objectives and actions) are aimed at increasing the number of gender mainstreaming initiatives (in the sectoral policies of the above-mentioned areas), increasing the number of local beneficiaries promoting equality between women and men, improving and expanding categories of social assistance services, strengthening human rights capacities, empowering under-represented women to be part of the decision-making process, increasing the role of men in promoting gender equality. We believe, however, that the objectives set must be better focused on the situations of gender inequalities that our society faces. At the same time, they should be more ambitious, which really aims to produce transformational reforms. Actions should be concrete and accompanied by resource allocations not only financial but also of another kind, such as: institutional and professional, technical, administrative capacities, etc.

In the vast majority, both the specific objectives and the indicators proposed for their monitoring and the actions set are not formulated according to the SMART criterion, and in some situations where this criterion is met, the reference values are missing, stating that they will be estimated during the current year. The question that does not delay appearing in this situation is: how, provided that the reference values for indicators which are proposed to be increased or reduced in weight or value have not been identified, has it been concluded that the data of these indicators indicate a problem requiring Government intervention?.

However, most likely the objectives and indicators proposed to be achieved were taken from the old policy document / identified from inertia and included in the new document, and having no basic reference values or generally measurable targets to target in the field of gender equality, this document will not be able to be monitored and even more efficiently evaluated. We rely on the fact that following the public consultation and interinstitutional approval process, the draft Program will be substantially improved, or not its approval should be considered as one of the measures implementing the EU Commission's recommendations and honoring other international commitments in this area, but directly the positive and sustainable changes it should bring about in the socio-economic fields, but for these changes to take place, in addition to approving a qualitative policy document, efforts, resources and political will are still needed, provided systemically for its effective implementation.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Republic of Moldova has managed to achieve significant results in ensuring equal opportunities for men and women when we refer to their use of rights,

²⁵ <https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/1-mmmp.pdf>

the freedoms and potential they have. However, much remains to be done, or statistical data indicate the maintenance of certain inequalities between women and men or, worse, in certain socio-economic sectors there is even a decline in relation to the indices of previous years. Since the problems of gender inequality will be combated, the positive impact on the development of society will not be long in coming.

An essential condition for ensuring the achievement of gender equality is, without a doubt, the integration of its dimension into the national policy system by considering it at all stages of the public policy cycle. This is even more critical to ensure that the country's aspirations to integrate into the European Union really form the true agenda of political authorities and leaders. The way in which the Chisinau authorities have chosen to carry out this goal varies from one type of policy to another and, not necessarily, this way of proceeding is based on certain objective arguments.

Although in the NDS, the gender dimension was omitted from the analysis of the situation chapter, however to a somewhat satisfactory extent it was considered in the results and implementation framework, in the NDS operationalization instrument, which also includes intervention measures for the implementation of the provisions of the Government Program and the most important international commitments of the State Republic of Moldova (we refer to NDP), the issue of gender equality is largely omitted.

The Government's action plan for 2023 expressly provides for a single action aimed at ensuring equal opportunities, but we must recognize that this is a rather complex one, or, provides for the development of a separate policy document dedicated to accelerating gender equality. However, analyzing the draft Program subject to public consultation, it is difficult to understand how this acceleration will be ensured because the objectives are vaguely formulated and not necessarily ambitious, and the proposed actions are not focused on solving the concrete causes that determine or fuel the maintenance of gender inequalities in Moldovan society.

We are thus testing a more formal integration of gender issues into national policies, so how reliable is the obvious results in ensuring gender equality?. Can this be caused by lack of capacity? of resources? of political will? or awareness of the importance of the subject (especially on the background of the crises to which the Chisinau authorities had to respond, especially in recent years)? The answer can range from simple to very complex.

What is certain is that more effective mechanisms are needed to plan how the authorities aim to achieve the commitments they make internationally, but also internally, in relation to the citizens in whose service they are. Moreover, it is essential to implement objective systems for monitoring and evaluating the results obtained in one field or another by external partners, by civil society and even the establishment of self-assessment systems based on records of government performance. The performance of a Government is not limited to the number of acts developed and approved, but to the number of measures that it manages to implement and is also created, the conditions for maintaining the results and positive effects of these measures.

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